

MORGENSTERN AND MERKUR FAMILIES PAPERS, 1913-1995

2017.101.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Morgenstern and Merkur families papers

Dates: 1913-1995 [bulk 1913-1949]

Accession number: 2017.101.1

Creator: Morgenstern family (Barycz :Poland)
Merkur family (Vienna :Austria)

Extent: 12 folders, 1 oversize box

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of the Morgenstern family of Barycz, Poland and Vienna, Austria, and the Merkur family of Vienna. The Morgenstern family materials include identification papers of Regina Morgenstern, who took a Kindertransport from Vienna to England in 1938; letters from her parents Taube and Mendel Morgenstern to her in London; and her diary from 1945. Also included are photographs of the Morgenstern family, including a photograph of Regina, Bernhard, and Helli Morgenstern reunited in Vienna after the war. The Merkur family materials include a book and loose sheet music of William's father Herman Merkur, who was a musician in Austria; a prayer book belonging to Herman; William's refugee identity card and post-war writings.

Languages: German, English, Hebrew

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), Morgenstern and Merkur families papers (2017.101.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Janet Merkur. Janet is the daughter of Regina Morgenstern and William Merkur.

Related materials: Regina Morgenstern and William Merkur's daughter, Janet Merkur, authored a book chronicling her family's experiences during the Holocaust.

Merkur, Janet. *Sunflowers: Erna Isaac's story, Surviving the Holocaust*. Sydney: Hot Rox Press, 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: Adam Fielding, March 2017

Biographical note

Berel Morgenstern was married to Helena Steinberger, and they had six children, Mendel (1891-1942), Ischu, Leo, Hella, Chaskel, and Bronya. They lived in Zręcin, Poland. Their son Mendel married Taube Weinberger (1893-1942). Taube was the youngest of sixteen children, whose siblings include Helena (later Helena Lipiner), Antonia, Jakob, Malka, Golda, Pessy, and Mendel.

Mendel and Taube lived in Barycz, Poland where Mendel worked as a merchant. Regina Morgenstern (b. 1924) was born on 15 August 1924 in Barycz. She had two sisters, Erna (Later Erna Isaac, b. 1920) and Helli (b. 1921), and three brothers, Max (b. 1923), Bernhard (b. 1926), and Joseph (1928-1944). In 1931, the family moved to Vienna, Austria where Mendel opened a kitchenware store with the assistance of his brother Chaskel. After the German annexation of Austria in 1938, Mendel was arrested, and only released with the assistance of a neighbor. During Kristallnacht on 11 November 1938, the family's store was robbed.

Her father had applied for visas to the United States, but did not receive them. Mendel and Taube decided to go back to Poland and went to Warsaw in 1939. They later returned to Barycz. In 1942 they were murdered in the forest near Jasienisca, Poland.

Erna, her boyfriend Leopold, his sister and her brother Max left Vienna around the end of 1938 or early 1939. They went to Frankfurt, Germany and then tried to walk to the Polish border. While Leopold and his sister had passports, Erna and Max did not. Max fled and Erna was arrested and jailed for two months. Max was never heard from again and presumed killed. After Erna was released, she returned to Vienna where she worked briefly before going to Poland. She stayed briefly with an aunt, and then joined her parents in Warsaw. After the start of World War II, Erna went to Lwów, Poland (present day Lviv, Ukraine) and then Kopeysk, Russia. She worked in a coal mine, and met her future husband, Nat. They then went to Fergana, Russia (present day Fergana, Uzbekistan) where they worked on a farm. Their daughter Anne was born, and they remained there for the duration of the war. After the war, they returned to Vienna and were reunited with Erna's brother Bernhard, her sister Helli, and Helli's husband Bertl Wagner. Erna, Nat, and Anne then immigrated to Israel. The immigrated to Sydney, Australia in 1954.

On 11 December 1938, her parents put Regina Morgenstern on a children's transport (Kindertransport) in Vienna and she went to England. She lived with a foster family. During the war, she joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and also worked as a translator for German codes. After the war, she returned to Vienna. She met William Merkur in 1945. They immigrated to Australia in 1951, settling in Sydney. They had one son, Harry, and one daughter, Janet.

After their parents left Vienna in 1939, Bernhard and Joseph, and were put in an orphanage. In 1942, they avoided being deported from the orphanage, and stayed with their sister Helli. They were deported to Theresienstadt. In 1944, Bernhard, Joseph, and Helli and her husband Bertl were deported to Auschwitz. Joseph was killed upon arrival. Bernhard and Bertl were deported to the Landsberg concentration camp and then the Dachau concentration camp. On 24 April 1945 they were sent on a death march from Dachau. Bernhard and Bertl managed to escape. They were arrested, but subsequently let go. Helli was deported to a factory, and then Dachau where she was liberated. After the war, Bernhard, Helli, and Bertl returned to Vienna.

William Adolf Merkur (born Adolf Merkur, b. 1922) was born on 3 May 1922 in Vienna to Mina Fendel and Herschel Herman Merkur. His parents were both from Galicia. He had three brothers, Bernhard, Isaak, and Sigmund and three sisters, Lisa, Nettie, and Augustina. His father was a musician.

In October 1942, his family was deported to Theresienstadt. One of his sisters went to France and then Switzerland. While in Theresienstadt, William was a forced-laborer making suits, and he and his brother Sigmund played music. In November 1944, William and Sigmund were deported to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp. They performed the same forced-labor there as in Theresienstadt. They were then sent to the Kaufering subcamp of the Dachau concentration camp where they were sent to a Messerschmitt airplane factory. Shortly after the camp was liberated, Sigmund died of illness on 2 May 1945. William returned to Vienna. His mother died of dysentery while in Theresienstadt, and his father perished at Auschwitz.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of the Morgenstern family of Barycz, Poland and Vienna, Austria, and the Merkur family of Vienna. The Morgenstern family materials include identification papers of Regina Morgenstern, who took a Kindertransport from Vienna to England in 1938; letters from her parents Taube and Mendel Morgenstern to her in London; and her diary from 1945. Also included are photographs of the Morgenstern family, including a photograph of Regina, Bernhard, and Helli Morgenstern reunited in Vienna after the war. The Merkur family materials include a book and loose sheet music of William's father Herman Merkur, who was a musician in Austria; William's refugee identity card and post-war writings.

System of arrangement

The collection has been arranged as two series by family. Folders are arranged alphabetically. Documents are arranged chronologically. Some photographs are copies.

Series 1: Morgenstern family, circa 1914-1949 and undated

Series 2: Merkur family, 1913-1995 and undated

Indexing terms

Person:

Morgenstern, Mendel, 1891-1942.
Morgenstern, Taube, 1893-1942.
Isaac, Erna, 1920-
Morgenstern, Regina, 1924-
Merkur, William, 1922-
Merkur, Herman.

Corporate:
Auschwitz (Concentration camp)
Kaufering (Concentration camp)
Theresienstadt (Concentration camp)

Topical Subject:
Kindertransports (Rescue operations)--Austria--Vienna.
Jewish families--Austria--Vienna.
Jewish musicians--Austria--Vienna.
Refugees, Jewish.

Geography:
Vienna (Austria)

Genre/Form:
Photographs.
Prayer books.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Morgenstern family, circa 1914-1949 and undated

Box	Folder	Title
		Morgenstern, Regina:
1	1	Correspondence, 1939 and undated
2	1	Diary, 1945
1	2	Identification papers, 1943-1949
		Photographs:
1	3	Morgenstern, Bernhard and Joseph, circa 1930s-1936
1	4	Morgenstern, Bernhard, Regina, and Helli with Bertl Wagner, Vienna, Austria, circa 1945
1	5	Morgenstern, Erna and Ignatz Broch, circa 1930s
1	6	Morgenstern family, circa 1914-circa 1920
1	7	Morgenstern, Helli and Bertl Wagner, circa 1940s
1	8	Weinberger, Helena, 1918 and undated

Series 2: Merkur family, 1913-1995 and undated

Box	Folder	Title
		Merkur, Herman:
2	2	Book of sheet music, circa 1920s
1	9	Business card, circa 1920s

1	10	Föderl, Karl. <i>Mir is der Huat heut z'klan!</i> , 1936.
2	3	Loose sheet music, circa 1920s
		Merkur, William:
1	11	Refugee identity card, 1949
1	12	Writings, 1995 and undated