

MAERKER AND BEHR FAMILIES PAPERS, CIRCA 1873-1983

2017.404.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Maerker and Behr families papers

Dates: circa 1873-1983

Accession number: 2017.404.1

Creator: Maerker (Family : Bernburg, Germany)
Behr (Family : Mainz, Germany)

Extent: 1.59 linear feet (2 boxes, 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-era experiences of Willy and Else (née Behr) Maerker, originally of Bernburg, Germany, and their children Gerhard and Inge, including their emigration from Germany in 1938. Included are identification and immigration papers, documents regarding Willy's service in World War I, correspondence, photographs, writings, and born-digital material. The collection also documents the pre-war and wartime experiences of the Behr family, primarily of Mainz, Germany. Many documents in the collection contain translations by Gerhard.

Languages: German, 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), Maerker and Behr families papers (2017.404.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Wendy Maerker Harris in 2017.

Related archival materials: World War I Cross of Honor medal (2017.404.2 a-b)

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, October 2017

Biographical note

William Maerker (Willy, 1889-1981) was born on 8 April 1889 in Bernburg, Germany to Louis (1858-1922) and Hedwig (née Weil, 1867-1940) Maerker. He had two brothers, Otto (1891-1942) and Kurt (1890-1955), and one sister, Grete (later Grete Simon, 1893-1960). His father was a businessman.

Else Behr (1893-1983) was born on 2 September 1893 in Duisburg, Germany to Bernhard (1861-1942) and Johanna (née Benedict, 1866-1942) Behr. She had two brothers, Bruno (1892-1942?) and Arthur (1894-1948), and one sister, Hertha (b. 1897). Both of her brothers served in World War I. Bernhard and Johanna operated a portrait studio in Mainz, Germany. They were also friends of Louis and Hedwig Maerker, whom they saw around once a year.

Willy and Else met through their parents, and corresponded during World War I. They married on 19 November 1919 in Mainz. They both worked for Willy's father's store, taking it over after he died in 1922. They were forced to sell the store in the 1930s due to increased Jewish persecution. Willy and Else had two children, Ingeborg (Inge, b. 1920) and Lutz Gerhard (Gerhard, b. 1923).

The family moved from Bernburg to Mainz in 1937 to live with Else's parents and begin the process of trying to obtain visas to emigrate from Germany. Before they left, Else's parents moved to a Jewish retirement home in Frankfurt am Main. On 11 May 1938, the family sailed out of Hamburg on the SS *President Roosevelt* to the United States.

They settled in Philadelphia, PA. Gerhard was drafted in 1943 and was discharged in 1946. He later became a chemist and married Roselle Kosack. Inge married Richard Oppenheimer in 1942.

Else's brother Arthur and her sister Hertha both immigrated to the United States. Both her parents died in a Jewish hospital in 1942. Willy's brother Otto died in the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1942. His brother Kurt and sister Grete both survived by emigrating from Germany.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust-era experiences of Willy and Else (née Behr) Maerker, originally of Bernburg, Germany, and their children Gerhard and Inge, including their emigration from Germany in 1938. Included are identification and immigration papers, documents regarding Willy's service in World War I, correspondence, photographs, writings, and born-digital material. The collection also documents the pre-war and wartime experiences of the Behr family, primarily of Mainz, Germany. Many documents in the collection contain translations by Gerhard.

The biographical material includes identification papers such as birth and death certificates, immigration documents including German passports, marriage certificates, and papers related to Willy's service in World War I.

The correspondence includes a letter sent from Louis Maerker to Bernhard and Johanna Behr regarding Willy and Else's upcoming marriage, wartime letters to Else from her mother Johanna in Frankfurt, a letter to Willy and Else from Hilda Meyerwitz telling them of the deaths of Else's mother and father, and letters from Willy to his parents.

The writings consist of a typescript translation of Gerhard Maerker's diary from 1938 discussing the family's immigration, and photocopies of writings by Else Maerker on a variety of family history topics.

The photographs depict pre-war and wartime lives of the Maerker and Behr families, including wartime photographs of Gerhard Maerker after he was drafted into the United States Army.

The born-digital material consists of family history, anecdotes, and typescript copies of many of Else's writings that appear in series 3.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series:

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1888-1983

Series 2: Correspondence, 1897-1961

Series 3: Writings, 1938 and undated

Series 4: Photographs, circa 1873-circa 1980

Series 5: Born-digital family history

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically. Some documents also contain translations by the donor.

Born-digital material has been copied from a CDR and kept in the order it appears.

Indexing terms

Person:

Maerker, Willy, 1899-1981.

Maerker, Else, 1893-1983.

Maerker, Inge, 1920-

Maerker, Gerhard, 1923-

Maerker, Louis, 1858-1922.

Maerker, Hedwig, 1867-1940.

Behr, Bernhard, 1861-1942.

Behr, Johanna, 1894-1948.

Corporate: United States. Army.

Topical Subject:

World War, 1914-1918--Veterans--Germany.

World War, 1939-1945--Veterans--United States.

Jews--Germany--Bernburg--History.

Geography:
Bernburg (Germany)
Duisburg (Germany)
Mainz (Germany : Landkreis)
United States--Emigration and immigration.

Genre/Form:
Photographs.
Photograph albums.
Personal narratives.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1888-1983

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Behr, Bernhard and Johanna: Marriage certificate, 1937
1.2	Maerker, Else: Identification papers, 1905-1983
1.3	Maerker, Else: Immigration papers, 1937-1943
1.4	Maerker, Gerhard: Identification papers, 1923-1954
1.5	Maerker, Gerhard: Immigration papers, 1937-1946
1.6	Maerker, Louis and Hedwig: wedding announcement, 1888
	Maerker, Willy:
1.7	Identification papers, 1901-1981
1.8	Immigration papers, 1937-1943
1.9	World War I, 1918-1935
1.10	Maerker, Willy and Else: Marriage certificates, 1919-1981

Series 2: Correspondence, 1897-1961

Box/Folder	Title
1.11	Behr, Bernhard and Johanna: Maerker, Louis, 1919
1.12	Maerker, Else: Behr, Hertha, 1958 (translated copies)
1.13	Maerker, Else: Behr, Johanna, 1941-1942
1.14	Maerker, Louis and Hedwig: Maerker, Willy, 1897-1941
1.15	Maerker, Willy: Trebing, Wilhelm, 1961
1.16	Maerker, Willy and Else: Maerker, Hedwig, 1925
1.17	Maerker, Willy and Else: Meyerwitz, Hilda, 1942
1.18	Simon family, 1941

Series 3: Writings, 1938 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.19-1.20	Maerker, Else, undated (2 folders)
1.21	Maerker, Gerhard: Diary, 1938 (typescript translation)

Series 4: Photographs, circa 1873-circa 1980

Box/Folder	Title
1.22	Behr, Arthur, undated
1.23	Behr, Bernhard, undated
1.24	Behr, Hertha, 1918-1943
1.25	Behr, Johanna, undated
1.26	Behr family, circa 1910-1973
1.27	Family and friends, circa 1900-1954
1.28	Maerker, Else, 1915-1938
1.29	Maerker, Gerhard, 1939-circa 1980
1.30	Maerker, Hedwig, 1888-circa 1930s
1.31	Maerker, Louis, 1888-circa 1920
1.32	Maerker, Willy, 1908-1938
1.33	Maerker family, circa 1885-circa 1920
1.34	Maerker family, 1938-1969
3	Photograph album, circa 1873-1945
1.35	Photograph album, loose photographs

Series 5: Born-digital family history

Box/Folder	Title
2	Print copies of born-digital family history
	2003 Update:
	Horst Maerker's Memories
	Jews in Thale
	History of the Maerker family – Narrative Introduction
	History of the Maerker family – List of Descendants
	History of the Maerker family – List of Descendants
	Maerker History – Supplement 1
	Maerker History – Supplement 2
	Ruth Schweitzer's Memories
	Gerhard Maerker's Story
	Historical Documents:
	History of the Maerker family – Narrative Introduction
	History of the Maerker family – List of Descendants
	Maerker History – Supplement 1
	Maerker History – Supplement 2
	Omi's Stories:
	A Picnic
	A Very Special Wedding
	How Our Children, Inge and Gerd, Grew Up
	How We Left Germany and Came to the US
	Lumpi
	Maerker Tree from Louis 1858
	Muschi Our Cat
	My Fondest Memory
	My Life
	My Parents

	Our Wedding and Our Obstacle Course to Our Honeymoon
	Poems to Our Youngest Granddaughter
	The Maerkers
	This is the story of your Grandparents Courtship, Marriage and Consequences
	To David Scott
	To My Grandchildren
	You Asked For It