

STEPHEN J. FRAENKEL PAPERS, circa 1830-2016
2017.556.1

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

Title: Stephen J. Fraenkel papers

Dates: circa 1830-2016 (bulk 1937-1948)

Accession number: 2017.556.1

Creator: Fraenkel, Stephen, J., 1917-2002.

Extent: 1.67 linear feet (4 boxes, 2 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Stephen Fraenkel of Berlin, Germany including his immigration to the United States in 1938 with the financial aid of the Sigma Alpha Mu Jewish fraternity at the University of Nebraska, his studies at the University of Nebraska and the Illinois Institute of Technology, his engineering career, his pathway to citizenship, and his efforts to assist his father Max Fraenkel emigrate from Germany. Included are numerous letters sent to Stephen by his father in Berlin from 1938-1942. The bulk of the collection consists of biographical materials, immigration papers, correspondence, employment and education records, and photographs.

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), Stephen J. Fraenkel papers (2017.556.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Charles M. Fraenkel in 2017.

Related archival materials: Stephen J. Fraenkel collection, Leo Baeck Institute (AR 25240)

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, January 2018

Biographical note

Stephen Joseph Fraenkel (born Stefan, 1917-2002) was born on 28 November 1917 in Berlin, Germany to Max and Martha Fraenkel. His father Max (born Sali, 1878-1944) was born in Zülz, Upper Silesia (Biała Prudnicka, Poland) to Simon (1830-1882) and Anna (née Kaufmann, 1840-1919) Fraenkel. He had three sisters, Rosa (b. 1861), Klara (b. 1864), and Hedwig (b. 1869). Max was a banker and moved to Berlin. He married Martha Plessner in Breslau, Germany (Wrocław, Poland) in 1916. Martha (1888-1932) was born in Kattowitz, Upper Silesia (Katowice, Poland) to Emanuel and Friederike (née Landau) Plessner.

Stephen's mother died in 1932, and his father lost his job at Deutsche Bank in 1935. He graduated from the Kaiser Friedrich Schule in 1936 and was one of two Jews admitted to the Technical University of Hannover in 1936 to study engineering. In 1937 he received a letter from Otto Toeplitz, a recently fired Jewish professor at the University of Bonn, on behalf of the International Student Service identifying Stephen as a candidate for a scholarship to study in the United States. The scholarships were supported by active Jewish fraternities. He was offered and accepted a scholarship to the University of Nebraska, supported by the Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity.

Stephen immigrated to the United States on a student visa in early 1938. While studying at the University of Nebraska, he also began to pursue permanent citizenship in the United States. He became a naturalized citizen in 1943 after re-entering the country in April 1941 on a Cuban visa. After completing his Masters' degree at the University of Nebraska in 1941, he worked for several engineering firms including the Armour Research Foundation of the Illinois Institute of Technology. He received his Ph.D from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1951.

While Stephen was trying to become an American citizen, he was also working to help his father emigrate from Germany. His father remained in Berlin after Stephen went to Nebraska and was subjected to continued persecution. They corresponded frequently until around November 1941. Stephen faced difficulty in getting Max a visa in part because of confusion over Max not going by his birth name, Sali. He finally succeeded on getting his father on the Cuban quota system, but by 1942 it was not possible for Max to leave Germany. He was deported to Theresienstadt in July 1942, and deported to Auschwitz in May 1944 where he perished. Stephen knew his father had been deported from Berlin in 1942, but did not learn his fate until after the war.

Stephen married Josephine Rubnitz (b. 1918) in 1941, and they had three children, Richard (b. 1945), Charles (b. 1948), and Martha (b. 1950).

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Stephen Fraenkel of Berlin, Germany including his immigration to the United States in 1938 with the financial aid of the Sigma Alpha Mu Jewish fraternity at the University of Nebraska, his studies at the University of Nebraska and the Illinois Institute of Technology, his engineering career, his pathway to citizenship, and his efforts to assist his father Max Fraenkel emigrate from Germany. Included are numerous letters sent to Stephen by his father in Berlin from 1938-1942. The bulk of the collection consists of biographical materials, immigration papers, correspondence, employment and education records, and photographs.

Series 1. Biographical materials include clippings; identification papers including birth, death, and marriage certificates; wills; Stephen's German passport; a copy of his unpublished memoir along with an annotated version provided by his son; and genealogical materials documenting the Fraenkel and Plessner families. Stephen's memoir primarily describes his life in Berlin up to his emigration in 1938, but also describes family history and his attempts to save his father. Also included are documents related to the history of S Fränkel Linenwerks; Max being forced to euthanize his dog Männe; papers pertaining to Max's fate in the Holocaust, including a letter from a friend describing what they knew about Max after he was deported; restitution paperwork filed by Stephen regarding Max's assets in Berlin; and Selective Service documents regarding Stephen's attempts to enlist in the United States Army.

Series 2. Immigration documents Stephen immigration and his attempts to help his father emigrate from Germany. Documents regarding Stephen's immigration include correspondence, visa applications and affidavits, and materials related to his trip to Cuba in April 1941 in order to re-enter the United States on a Cuban visa. Documents regarding Max include Stephen trying to clarify Max's name (Sali Max Fraenkel), affidavits, applications, correspondence, and efforts to get Max on the Cuban visa quota.

Series 3. Correspondence primarily consists of letters sent to Stephen by his father Max. In the letters, Max continually urges Stephen to find a way to stay in the United States, discusses Stephen's academic and employment career, relates family news, and discusses his own emigration situation. He also notes often how much slower and more difficult it became to receive mail. In June 1942 he sent a message through the Red Cross saying that he was leaving Berlin, but didn't know where. There are postcards Max sent his relatives Dorothea and Josef Plessner from Theresienstadt in 1943-1944, but the bulk of them are payment receipts. Other correspondence of Stephen includes letters from childhood friends Ursel Gersdorf and Stan Owen, Otto Toeplitz and his son Gideon Toeplitz, members of the Plessner and Michaelis families, and various correspondents regarding Fraenkel family history and genealogy.

Series 4. Education documents Stephen's academic career including his German high school Kaiser Friedrich Schule, Technical University of Hannover, University of Nebraska, and Illinois Institute of Technology. Also included is postwar correspondence regarding the Jewish fraternity that sponsored his immigration to the United States, Sigma Alpha Mu.

Series 5. Employment contains job related correspondence, certificates, professional engineering organization materials, job offers, and resumes.

Series 6. Photographs include depictions of the Fraenkel family, including photographs of portraits and family friend Kurt Michaelis performing in the Jewish Kulturbund Orchestra. Photographs of Stephen include depictions of his childhood, his time at the University of Nebraska, his Sigma Alpha Mu reunion in 2001, and he and his wife Josephine.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as six series.

- Series 1. Biographical material, 1912-2016
- Series 2. Immigration, 1937-1956
- Series 3. Correspondence, 1935-2003
- Series 4. Education, 1933-2002
- Series 5. Employment, 1940-1989
- Series 6. Photographs, circa 1830-2011

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically for series 1-3, 5-6. Series 4 folders have been arranged chronologically.

Correspondence and some documents include transcriptions and translations provided by the donor.

Indexing terms

Person:

- Fraenkel, Stephen J., 1917-2002.
- Fraenkel, Sali Max, 1878-1944.

Corporate:

- Theresienstadt (Concentration camp).
- Sigma Alpha Mu
- United States. Selective Service Board (Washington, D.C.)
- University of Nebraska.
- International Student Service

Topical Subject:

- Jews--Germany--Berlin.
- Engineering students
- Genealogy.
- Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations--Germany.
- World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Germany--Berlin.
- World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue.

Geography:

- United States--Emigration and immigration.
- Berlin (Germany).
- Havana (Cuba)

Genre/Form:

- Photographs.
- Correspondence.
- Affidavits.
- Personal narratives.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1. Biographical material, 1912-2016

Box/Folder	Title
1.1, OS 2	Clippings, 1934-1945 (2 folders)
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	Fraenkel, Max:
1.3	Forced euthanasia of dog, 1942
1.4	Holocaust fate, circa 1946-2014
1.5	Will, 1940-1941
1.6	1933-1942
1.7	Fraenkel, Simon, 1936-1942
	Fraenkel, Stephen:
1.8	In Memoriam, 2002
1.9	Memoir, 1990, 2016
1.10	Passports, Germany, 1933, 1938
1.11	Restitution regarding Max Fraenkel's assets, 1949-1959
1.12	Selective Service, 1940-1946
1.13	War ration book, circa 1943
1.14	1930-1943
	Fraenkel family:
1.15	Articles and maps, 1926-2001
1.16	Death certificates and will, 1919
1.17	Family trees
1.18	Family history, 1927-2005
1.19	Plessner, Charlotte, 1914-1915
1.20, OS 1	Plessner, Max, 1938 (2 folders)
1.21	Plessner family, 1987-2005
1.22	Rohrbach, Adolf, 1912, 1939

Series 2. Immigration, 1937-1956

Box/Folder	Title
	Fraenkel, Max:
1.23	1939-1941
1.24	1942-1946
	Fraenkel, Stephen:
1.25	1937
1.26	1938-1939
1.27	1940
2.1	1941
2.2	1941 April, Cuba trip
2.3	1942-1956
2.4	Visa applications and affidavits, 1941

Series 3. Correspondence, 1935-2003

Box/Folder	Title
2.5	Fraenkel, Josephine, 2003

2.6	Fraenkel, Max: Fraenkel, Stephen, 1935-1941
2.7	Fraenkel, Max: Pinkus, Hans, 1936
2.8	Fraenkel, Max, postcards from Theresienstadt, 1943-1944
	Fraenkel, Stephen:
2.9	Eilenberg, Fred and Hans, 1991
2.10	Fraenkel, Max, 1938
2.11	Fraenkel, Max, 1939 January-June
2.12	Fraenkel, Max, 1939 July-December
2.13	Fraenkel, Max, 1940 January-June
3.1	Fraenkel, Max, 1940 July-December
3.2	Fraenkel, Max, 1941 January-July
3.3	Fraenkel, Max, 1941 August-November, 1942 June
3.4	Fraenkel, Max, empty envelopes
3.5	Genealogy correspondence, 1986-2000
3.6	Gersdorf, Ursul and family, 1939, 1994-2001
3.7	Leo Baeck Institute, 1976
3.8	Owen, Stan, 1941
3.9	Pinkus, Hans, 1963-1967
3.10	Plessner, Otto, 1987
3.11	Reichart, Walter, 1976-1979
3.12	Richter, Fritz, 1975
3.13	Toeplitz, Gideon, 2002
3.14	Toeplitz, Otto, 1938
3.15	Yad Vashem, 1986-1987
3.16	Zamkin, Fanny, 1941
3.17	1937-2001

Series 4. Education, 1933-2002

Box/Folder	Title
3.18	Kaiser Friedrich Schule, 1933-2010
3.19	High school exchange program, London, 1935
3.20	Technical University of Hannover, 1937-1938
3.21	University of Nebraska, 1937-1941
3.22	Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity, 1937-2002
3.23	Illinois Institute of Technology, 1940-1951

Series 5. Employment, 1940-1989

Box/Folder	Title
3.24	Armour Research Foundation of Illinois Institute of Technology, 1940-1954
3.25	Certificates and engineering organizations, 1945-1958
3.26	Correspondence and documents, 1940-1982
3.27	Link-Belt Company, 1944
3.28	Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company, 1941-1944
4.1	Resumes, 1940-1989

Series 6. Photographs, circa 1830-2011

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4.7	Fraenkel, Martha, circa 1915-1930
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4.12	Childhood, 1921-1935
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