

PAUL MAYER PAPERS, 1938-1982
2019.208.1

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

Title: Paul Mayer papers

Dates: 1938-1982 (bulk 1938-1954)

Accession number: 2019.208.1

Creator: Mayer, Paul, 1923-1983.

Extent: .5 linear feet (1 box, 3 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust and post-war experiences of Paul Mayer, originally of Frankfurt am Main, including his forced labor in the Blankenburg am Harz concentration camp in 1945, his father Fritz Mayer's deportation and death in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943, his immigration to the United States in 1947, and his studies at the University of Cincinnati. Included are biographical materials, immigration papers, correspondence, diaries, an illustrated personal narrative titled *Vom Main zum Ohio*, and one photograph.

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), Paul Mayer papers (2019.208.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Virginia Mayer in 2019. Virginia is the widow of Paul Mayer.

Separated material: Also donated are 21 drawings by Paul Mayer (2019.208.5-26) and three publications: Hymnal and prayer book, 1886 (2019.208.2), *Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen mach ich die kleinen Lieder* by Heinrich Heine, 1946 (2019.208.3), and *Das Technischen Rechnen* by Hans R. Rode, published in Berlin in 1933 by the Verlagsgesellschaft des Deutschen Metallarbeitersverbandes (2019.208.4).

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, July 2019

Biographical note

Paul Gustav Wilhelm Mayer (1923-1983) was born on 3 November 1923 in Fechenheim, a suburb of Frankfurt am Main, Germany to Friedrich Mayer (Fritz, 1888-1943) and Alice Lucy Waeldin (1897-1977). Paul's Jewish father met his Protestant mother while studying in Straßburg. Fritz was a World War I veteran and opened a shop selling textiles and home goods in Frankfurt am Main around 1919. Paul had five siblings: Marianne (1915-1942), Margarete (1921-2000), Helga (1922-1982), Heinz Helmut (1924-2001), and Gretel.

After the Nazi rise to power Fritz's business was impacted by punitive anti-Jewish laws. He attempted to put the business in Alice's name, but was unsuccessful. Paul became a locksmith apprentice at 15, and his older siblings began working to support the family. After Kristallnacht in November 1938 Fritz was arrested and sent to Buchenwald until his release in February 1939. Despite pressure to do so, Alice refused to divorce Fritz. He was also subjected to forced-labor.

Paul identified as a Christian, and was confirmed in 1938. He was also a gifted athlete and continued to play on a regional soccer team using a false name to conceal his Jewish ancestry.

In 1942, Paul's sister Marianne died of an untreated infection. In January 1943 Fritz was arrested by the Frankfurt Gestapo and imprisoned until his deportation to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. He was able to send his family a single postcard before they were informed he died on 25 August 1943, allegedly from myocarditis.

In March 1945 Paul and his brother Heinz were arrested by the Gestapo and sent to the Blankenburg am Harz concentration camp in the Harz Mountains as forced laborers. As Allied forces approached the brother escaped, but were fired upon. One of the books Paul was carrying stopped a bullet that would have otherwise hit him.

After the war Paul was trained and employed by the Reichsbahn. In 1947, with assistance from the American Christian Committee for German Refugees, Paul and Heinz immigrated to the United States aboard the USS *Ernie Pyle*. They settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. Alice, Margarete, and Helga joined them two years later. Paul enrolled in the Engineering College at the University of Cincinnati. He went on to receive his masters and doctorate degrees from Cornell University. While at Cornell, Paul met his future wife Virginia. They married in Ithaca. In 1959 he became a professor at Georgia Tech. He died shortly after his retirement in 1985. Paul and Virginia had four children: Frederick, Marianne, Laura, and Donald.

Biography by Adam Fielding and Cassandra LaPrade Seuthe

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust and post-war experiences of Paul Mayer, originally of Frankfurt am Main, including his forced labor in the Blankenburg am Harz concentration camp in 1945, his father Fritz Mayer's deportation and death in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943, his immigration to the United States in 1947, and his studies at the University of Cincinnati. Included are biographical materials, immigration papers, correspondence, diaries, an illustrated personal narrative titled *Vom Main zum Ohio*, and one photograph.

Biographical materials include clippings related to Paul while he was a student at the University of Cincinnati; his education in Germany and apprenticeship with master locksmith Heinrich Thielmann; his studies at the University of Cincinnati; post-war employment at the Reichsbahn; identification papers such as his certificate of identity in lieu of passport and a certificate from his confirmation in 1938; a clipping and poem regarding the death of Paul's sister Marianne in 1942; and Alice Waeldin's family genealogy book and business card from a lingerie store she worked at in Germany. There is a document from 1 March 1945 informing Paul that he was to be deported to the Blankenburg am Harz concentration camp for forced labor. Also included are photocopies of documents related to Fritz's imprisonment and death in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943 including the postcard Paul's father sent his family, a deposit slip for 40 RM deposited for Fritz, and the postcard received in 1943 informing Alice that Fritz had died of myocarditis.

Immigration papers include Paul's Emigration Assembly Center ticket and embarkation card, inventory of items he was bringing with him, his ticket for the USS *Ernie Pyle*, Selective Service documents, and naturalization certificate.

Correspondence includes two post-war letters to Paul and Heinz from their mother Alice, and a postcard from his former pastor.

Writings include three diaries spanning 1945-1950, a book of poetry, and an illustrated personal memoir *Vom Main zum Ohio*, that chronicles Paul's Holocaust experiences and his immigration to the United States.

Photographs consist of a photo of Paul at his confirmation in March 1938.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as five series.

- Series 1. Biographical material, 1938-1982
- Series 2. Immigration, 1947-1952
- Series 3. Correspondence, 1947-1952 and undated
- Series 4. Diaries and other writings, 1944-1950
- Series 5. Photographs, 1938

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

Indexing terms

Person:

Mayer, Paul, 1923-1983.

Corporate:
Auschwitz-Birkenau (Concentration camp)
University of Cincinnati.
Blankenburg am Harz (Concentration camp)

Topical Subject:
Jews--Germany--Frankfurt am Main.
Protestants--Germany.
Forced labor--Germany.

Geography:
Frankfurt am Main (Germany).
United States--Emigration and immigration.
Cincinnati (Ohio)

Genre/Form:
Diaries.
Clippings.
Photographs.
Personal narratives.
Correspondence.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1. Biographical material, 1938-1982

Box/Folder	Title
1.1, OS 1	Clippings, 1949-1954, 1982, undated
1.2	Education, Germany, 1930-1947
1.3-1.4, OS 2	Education, University of Cincinnati, 1948-1954 (2 folders)
1.5	Employment, Germany, 1946-1947
1.6	Employment, United States, 1947-1950
1.7, OS 3	Identification papers, 1938, 1945-1957
1.8	Miscellaneous, undated
1.9	Mayer, Fritz: Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1943
1.10	Mayer, Marianne: death, 1942
1.11	Waeldin, Alice: genealogy book and business card, 1941 and undated

Series 2. Immigration, 1947-1952

Box/Folder	Title
1.12	Immigration papers, 1947-1952

Series 3. Correspondence, 1947-1952 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.13	Correspondence, 1947-1952 and undated

Series 4. Diaries and other writings, 1944-1950

Box/Folder	Title
1.14	Diary, 1 January 1945 - 7 January 1947
1.15	Diary, 20 February 1947 - 13 April 1948
1.16	Diary, 31 August 1948 - 21 September 1950
1.17	Drawings: Bremen Emigrant Staging Area, 1947 (photocopies)
1.18	Poetry book, 1944
1.19-1.20	<i>Vom Main zum Ohio</i> , 1947 (2 folders)

Series 5. Photographs, 1938

Box/Folder	Title
1.21	Mayer, Paul, 1938