

COHN, HEINEMANN, AND RHÉE FAMILIES PAPERS, circa 1890-2016

2019.210.2

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Cohn, Heinemann, and Rhée families papers

Dates: circa 1890-2016

Accession number: 2019.210.2

Creator: Cohn (Family : Berlin, Germany)

Additional creator: Heinemann (Family : Lüneburg, Germany)

Additional creator: Rhée (Family : Dortmund, Germany)

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

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 the Cohn, Heinemann, and Rhée families of Germany, including Else, Max, and their daughter Eva (later Eva Cohn) Rhée's emigration from Lüneburg, Germany to England in 1938; Max, Ida, and their son Hans Cohn's flight from Berlin to Shanghai in 1939; and restitution made to the descendants of Marcus Heinemann by the Museum Lüneburg in 2015 for objects acquired by the museum after Marcus's assets were seized after Kristallnacht. Included are biographical materials, immigration documents and correspondence, and photographs.

Languages: German, English

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use.

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), Cohn, Heinemann, and Rhée families papers (2019.210.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Esther R. "Becki" Cohn-Vargas in 2019. Two accretions were also donated in 2019. The collections previously accessioned as 2019.210.1, 2019.211.1, and 2019.212.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Related materials:

Oral history interview with Eva Cohn (1999.A.0122, RG-50.477.0144)

Oral history interview with Cantor Hans Cohn (1999.A.0122, RG-50.477.0148)

Cohn, Hans. *Risen From the Ashes: Tales of a Musical Messenger*. Lanham: Hamilton books, 2006.

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, September 2019

Biographical note

Else Henriette Rhée (née Heinemann, 1887-1978) was born on 25 October 1887 in Lüneburg, Germany to Robert Simon (1856-1920) and Selma (née Sternau, d. 1931) Heinemann. She had five siblings: Fritz (1889-1970), Gertrud (b. 1891), Lottie (1892-1972), Kurt (1895-1980), and Hans (1902-1994). Her father Robert was the son of Marcus (1819-1908) and Henriette (née Lindenberg, 1836-1883) Heinemann. Marcus had at least 14 children, and owned a successful bank in Lüneburg. He was also a patron on the arts and helped fund the construction of the Lüneburg Synagogue.

Max Albert Rhée (1881-1941) was born on 29 December 1881 in Dortmund, Germany to Albert and Bertha (née Winter) Rhée. He had at least one sister, Paula (later Paula Kleinstadt). Max owned an export business.

Else and Max married on 30 September 1913 in Lüneburg. They had three children: Hans (1915-1994), Robert (1916-2013), and Eva (later Eva Cohn, 1926-2000). In 1933, Hans immigrated to England and Robert went to the Netherlands. Shortly after Kristallnacht, Eva and her parents went to England with help from the Clarks, a Quaker family Hans met in England, who sponsored them. Else, Max, and Eva immigrated to the United States in 1940. They were sponsored by Else's brother Kurt, who had immigrated to the United States previously. The family settled in California.

Eva became a teacher, and eventually taught German in Palo Alto. She married Hans Cohn in 1949. They had three children: Becki (b. 1952), Ruth (b. 1955), and Barbara (b. 1958).

Hans Cohn (1926-) was born in Berlin, Germany to Max Cohn and Ida Graupner Cohn (1886-1939). His parents owned a clothing store in the Wedding district of Berlin. During Kristallnacht, Hans witnessed his cantor rescuing Torah scrolls from their burning synagogue. In 1939 his family fled to Shanghai, China aboard the *Conte Biancamano*. His parents opened a small restaurant, but Ida died of dysentery 5 months after arriving in Shanghai. Hans worked in restaurants for the duration of the war, and later as a translator for the United States Army. He also started taking singing lessons while in Shanghai. In 1945,

determined to leave Shanghai, Hans sailed to Australia as a stowaway on the *General Gordon*. He lived as an undocumented immigrant there for two years before turning himself in and agreeing to leave the country in lieu of going to jail. He was sponsored by his uncle Martin Cohn and immigrated to the United States in September 1947. He settled in Los Angeles where he worked as a chef, at one point owning his own restaurant Le Coq d'Or. Hans and Eva Rhée married in 1949 in Los Angeles. They moved to New York in 1957 where Hans attended cantorial school at Hebrew Union College. They later moved back to California in 1964 where Hans served as cantor at Temple Beth Jacob. In 1979, Temple Beth Jacob caught fire. Hans managed to rescue a single Torah scroll from the incident that was suspected as arson related to anti-Semitic threats received by the temple.

Max's sister Paula and her husband Josef Max Berthold Kleinstadt perished during the Holocaust.

After Kristallnacht, Marcus Heinemann's estate was auctioned off. In 1940 the Museum Lüneburg acquired several objects, including a family bible, belonging to the estate. In 2014, Anneke de Rudder, a provenance researcher for the museum discovered documentation regarding how the objects were acquired. Using names found in the family bible, she was able to locate and contact descendants of Marcus Heinemann. In 2015 the objects were returned to extended family members who gathered in Lüneburg for a family reunion, many of them meeting for the first time. The museum also issued a formal apology. After receiving the objects back, the descendants agreed to keep them at the museum on loan.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust-era experiences of the Cohn, Heinemann, and Rhée families of Germany, including Else, Max, and their daughter Eva (later Eva Cohn) Rhée's emigration from Lüneburg, Germany to England in 1938; Max, Ida, and their son Hans Cohn's flight from Berlin to Shanghai in 1939; and restitution made to the descendants of Marcus Heinemann by the Museum Lüneburg in 2015 for objects acquired by the museum after Marcus's assets were seized after Kristallnacht. Included are biographical materials, immigration documents and correspondence, and photographs.

Biographical material includes a clipping from *Ostasiatischer Lloyd* from 3 May 1945; Eva Cohn's birth certificate and copies of personal narratives; a letter of recommendation regarding Hans Cohn's work for the United States Army as a translator; a menu from Ida Cohn's restaurant in Shanghai; Kurt Heinemann's naturalization certificate, birth certificate, and the text for his eulogy; and Max and Else Rhée's birth certificates, marriage certificates, and financial documents related to emigration from Germany. Other documents include a small amount of correspondence, correspondence related to the Max and Else Rhée's immigration to England in 1938, and documents and copies of emails related to restitution to the descendants of Marcus Heinemann from the Museum Lüneburg in 2015.

Photographs include pre-war and post-war depictions of Eva and Hans Cohn, including their wedding; Max and Ida Cohn; the Heinemann family; and the Rhée family.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as two series.

Series 1. Biographical material, 1914-2015 and undated

Series 2. Photographs, circa 1890-2016 and undated

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

Indexing terms

Person:

Rhée, Else, 1887-1978.
Rhée, Max, 1881-1941.
Rhée, Hans, 1915-1994.
Rhée, Robert, 1916-2013.
Cohn, Hans, 1926-
Cohn, Eva, 1926-2000.
Cohn, Ida, 1886-1939.
Cohn, Max.
Heinemann, Kurt, 1895-1980.
Heinemann, Marcus, 1819-1908.

Topical Subject:

Jews--Germany--Berlin.
Jews--Germany--Dortmund.
Jews--Germany--Lüneburg.
Refugees, Jewish--China--Shanghai.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations.
Holocaust survivors.

Geography:

Berlin (Germany)
Lüneburg (Germany)
Dortmund (Germany)
Shanghai (China)
England--Emigration and immigration.

Genre/Form:

Photographs.
Letters.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1. Biographical material, 1914-2015 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
OS 1	Clipping, 1945
1.1	Cohn, Eva, 1939-2000
1.2	Cohn, Hans, 1946 and undated
1.3	Cohn, Ida, 1939
1.4	Correspondence, 1941, 1967
1.5	Heinemann, Kurt, 1943-1980
1.6	Heinemann family, 1970-1995 and undated
1.7	Immigration correspondence, 1938-1939
1.8	Museum Lüneburg restitution, 2014-2015
1.9	Rhée, Else, 1938-1978

1.10	Rhée, Else and Max: marriage certificates, 1914-1960
1.11	Rhée, Max, 1922-1939

Series 2. Photographs, circa 1890-2016 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.12	Cohn, Eva, circa 1932-1949
1.13	Cohn, Hans, circa 1939-2016
1.14	Cohn family, 1910-circa 1939 and undated
1.15	Heinemann family, circa 1890-1946
1.16	Rhée family, 1922-1938 and undated