

SONJA SPEYER ECHT PAPERS, 1927-2014
2019.260.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
Tel. (202) 479-9717
e-mail: reference@ushmm.org

Descriptive summary

Title: Sonja Speyer Echt papers

Dates: 1927-2014

Accession number: 2019.260.1

Creator: Echt, Sonja Speyer, 1926-

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 pre-war, wartime, and post-war experiences of Sonja Speyer Echt, originally of Guxhagen, Germany, including her childhood in Guxhagen, immigration to the United States in February 1938 on a Kindertransport, and her efforts to receive restitution from Germany. Included is her German passport, a copy of her birth certificate, a wartime postcard from her family in Guxhagen, genealogy notes, One Thousand Children reunion materials, restitution claims, and photographs. The photographs include depictions of Sonja, her sister Rita, Berta, and family tombstones.

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), Sonja Speyer Echt papers (2019.260.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Irving Birkner in 2019. Irving is the grandson of Sonja Speyer Echt.

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, November 2019

Biographical note

Sonja Speyer Echt (born Sofie Speyer or Speier, 1926-) was born on 20 July 1926 in Guxhagen, Germany to Emanuel and Betty Speyer. Emanuel (1884-1941?) was born in Guxhagen in 1884 to Salomon and Regine Speyer. Betty (née Neumann, 1894-) was born in 1894 in Burgpreppach, Germany to Wolf and Sofie (née Friedmann) Neumann. Sonja had one sister, Rita (later Rita Gütthermann, b. 1923), and one brother, Siegfried (b. 1930). The family kept a kosher household. Emanuel was a World War I veteran and he and Betty married in 1920 in Kassel, Germany. He ran his own business and Betty did his bookkeeping.

Fearing for her safety after receiving beatings from both the students and teachers at her school in Guxhagen in 1937, Sonja's parents sent her to Kassel. Her mother's brother Solomon lived there and helped place her in a Jewish orphanage. He arranged for her to go on a Kindertransport and in February 1938 she boarded the SS *Manhattan* for the United States. After arriving in New York, she was placed in Columbus, Ohio as a foster child.

Sonja's father was arrested during Kristallnacht in November 1938 and briefly imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp until 15 December 1938. Her parents and siblings were deported from Guxhagen to the Riga ghetto on 6 December 1941. Emanuel, Betty, and Siegfried likely perished in the ghetto or at Auschwitz. Sonja's sister Rita survived the Holocaust and immigrated to the United States in 1946 aboard the SS *Marine Perch*.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the pre-war, wartime, and post-war experiences of Sonja Speyer Echt, originally of Guxhagen, Germany, including her childhood in Guxhagen, immigration to the United States in February 1938 on a Kindertransport, and her efforts to receive restitution from Germany. Included is her German passport, a copy of her birth certificate, a wartime postcard from her family in Guxhagen, genealogy notes, One Thousand Children reunion materials, restitution claims, and photographs. The photographs include depictions of Sonja, her sister Rita, Berta, and family tombstones.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as a single series.

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

Indexing terms

Person:

Echt, Sonja Speyer, 1926-

Speyer, Emanuel.

Speyer, Betty.

Speyer, Rita.

Speyer, Siegfried.

Corporate:
One Thousand Children, Inc.

Topical Subject:
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations.
Jews--Germany--Guxhagen.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Children.
Holocaust survivors.

Geography:
United States--Emigration and immigration.
Guxhagen (Germany)
Kassel (Germany)

Genre/Form:
Passport.
Photographs.
Correspondence.

CONTAINER LIST

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Biographical material, 1927-1937 and undated
1.2	Correspondence, 1940-1945 and undated
1.3, OS 1	Genealogy, 2001
1.4	One Thousand Children, 2002-2003
1.5	Photographs: Speyer family, 1928-1937
1.6	Photographs: Speyer family tombstones, undated
1.7-1.8	Restitution, 1953-2014 (2 folders)