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Inventory of the Berlijn Family Papers, circa 1942-2005

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Berlijn family papers
Date(s)	circa 1942-2005
Creator:	Berlijn family
Abstract:	The collection consists of a photograph album, memoir, and other papers relating to the Berlijn family, including Nico Berlijn and his parents, Johanna Spielmann and Abraham "Bram" Berlijn, Dutch Jews who survived World War II in hiding in the Netherlands. Also includes a Star of David badge issued to Johanna Spielmann Berlijn.
Extent:	1.25 linear feet (5 folders, 1 flat box)
Repository:	Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries 66 George Street Charleston, SC 29424 Phone: (843) 953-8016 Fax: (843) 953-6319 URL: http://archives.library.cofc.edu
Call Number:	Mss 1065-053
Language of Material:	Materials in English and Dutch

Biographical Note

Johanna Spielmann was born in October 1913 in Doetinchem, the Netherlands. She married Abraham "Bram" Berlijn on March 22, 1942. In September 1942 all Jewish men in the Netherlands were required to go to a labor camp in Ruinen, but Bram Berlijn had an exemption because he worked as a rag-and-bone man. He used his job as a cover to deliver food where it was needed.

In October 1942 the Berlijns were deported to Westerbork, a transit camp, where they removed their Star of David badges and managed to escape. They made their way back to Doetinchem, visited their parents, then left to go into hiding with a sympathetic farmer. They lived in several different locations, including a chicken house in the woods, and eventually Johanna's mother and stepfather joined them. In February 1944 Johanna's stepfather passed away from stress and old age, and the rest all lived in secrecy until April 1945, when German soldiers began to search the farm looking for deserters. Though the Germans asked about the chicken house, they did not search it, and everyone hidden there survived, including a second Jewish family, the Grunenbergs. The area was liberated by the Allies on May 5, 1945.

After liberation, Johanna and Bram Berlijn returned to Doetinchem to find their home bombed and looted. Bram's parents, sister, and brother, along with their families, had been killed by the Nazis. The Berlijns were determined to make a fresh start and secured a new home with some second-hand furniture, where they lived until 1952. Their daughter, Loes, was born in 1947; their son, Nico, was born in 1948. In December 1967 Nico left the Netherlands for Israel and helped start Ein Zivan Kibbutz in the Golan Heights. While there, he met and married his first wife, Laurie Ash, with whom he had two children, Hagar and Raviv. Nico immigrated to the United States in 1990 after marrying his second wife, Susan Addlestone, in Amsterdam. They settled in Charleston, South Carolina, with her two children.

Collection Overview

The collection consists of a photograph album, memoir, and other papers relating to the Berlijn family, including Nico Berlijn and his parents, Johanna Spielmann and Abraham "Bram" Berlijn, Dutch Jews who survived World War II in hiding in the Netherlands. Also includes a Star of David badge issued to Johanna Spielmann Berlijn.

Collection Arrangement

Materials are described at the folder level.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research.

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Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person, family, or organization, by topical subject, by place, and by types of material.

Names

- Berlijn, Abraham
- Berlijn, Johanna Spielmann, 1913-1993
- Berlijn, Nico, 1948-
- Berlijn family

Subjects

- Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)
- Holocaust survivors
- World War, 1939-1945--Jewish resistance--Netherlands

Places

- Netherlands--History--German occupation, 1940-1945
- Doetinchem (Netherlands)

Types of Material

Badges
Color photographs
Excerpts
Memoirs
Photocopies
Photograph albums
Reproductions

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Berlijn family papers, College of Charleston Libraries, Charleston, SC, USA.

Acquisitions Information

Materials were donated in 2005 and 2013 by Susan Addlestone Berlijn, wife of Nico Berlijn.

Processing Information

Processed by Rebecca McClure, September 2013.

Encoded by Rebecca McClure, October 2013.

Reviewed, edited, and uploaded by Martha McTear, December 2013.

Inventory

- Folder 1 **Memoir of Johanna Spielmann Berlijn, 1992**
- Memoir in Dutch transcribed from an oral history interview with Johanna Spielmann Berlijn. Anja Wikkerink, the youngest child of one of the families that hid the Berlijn family during the war, recorded the interview and created the memoir, entitled *Mijn Leven in de Oorlogsjaren, 1940-1945 (My Life in the War Years, 1940-1945)*.
- Folder 2 **Translation of memoir of Johanna Spielmann Berlijn, 2005**
- English translation of Johanna Spielmann Berlijn's memoir by Suzanna Dammes.
- Folder 3 **Excerpt from *Doetinchem in Oorlogstijd: Vijf Jaar Duitse Bezetting in Doetinchem en Gaanderen*, 1996**
- Photocopies of pages 72-74 of the Dutch book *Doetinchem in Oorlogstijd: vijf jaar Duitse bezetting in Doetinchem en Gaanderen (Doetinchem in Wartime: Five Years of German Occupation in Doetinchem and Gaanderen)*, which include photographs of Eva Berlijn van Coeverden, Abraham Berlijn's sister, and her husband, Leo van Coeverden, in 1940. A 1942 photograph shows Eva with their daughter, Julieke. In March 1943, the family was arrested and taken to Westerbork, a transit camp, where they found Leo's parents. In May 1943, all five were deported by train to Poland, where they were killed in the Sobibor extermination camp. While aboard the train, Leo van Coeverden managed to write a postcard to friends explaining their situation and asking for help, which he threw out of the train. The postcard was found and delivered, a copy of which is included in the book and photocopied here.
- Folder 4 **Work permit, November 25, 1945**
- Dutch permit for work as a trader in hides used by Bram Berlijn.
- Folder 5 **Star of David badge, circa 1942**
- Yellow cloth Star of David badge imprinted with the word "Jood" (Dutch for "Jew") issued to Johanna Spielmann Berlijn.
- Box 1 **Photograph album, circa 1900-1984**
- Included in album are reproductions and original photographs of the Berlijn family in the Netherlands and Israel. Images date from circa 1900-1984 and show Abraham and Johanna Spielmann Berlijn; Nico and Loes Berlijn, their children; Sophia Berlijn de Bruin and Louis Berlijn, parents of Abraham Berlijn; Hinda Moskovitch and Gustav Spielmann, parents of Johanna Spielmann Berlijn; and other friends and family members, including aunts, uncles, and cousins. Loes Berlijn compiled the album and gave it to her brother, Nico Berlijn, for his 50th birthday.