

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the Hiemenz Family Papers

Collection Summary

Collection Title: Hiemenz Family Papers

Call Number: MG 206

Creator: unknown

Inclusive Dates: 1932-1946

Bulk Dates: 1939-1944

Abstract: The majority of this collection contains papers written by Liesel Hiemenz dealing with World War II. There are accounts of her time in Europe during the very beginning of World War II in 1939. There are stories written by Liesel used on public radio during the War, and there are letters from 1945-1946 in regards to the death of her father Dr. William Hiemenz. There are also photographs of the Hiemenz family, and a small photo album made by Liesel when she was in Europe, 1937-1939.

Quantity: 2 boxes, 7 folders

Administrative Information

Custodial History: Unknown

Preferred Citation: Hiemenz Family Papers, MG 206. Albany Institute of History & Art Library, New York.

Acquisition Information:

Accession #: LIB.2010.236

Accession Date: September 2010

Processing Information:

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Restrictions

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: Permission to publish material must be obtained in writing prior to publication from the Chief Librarian & Archivist, Albany Institute of History & Art, 125 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210.

Index Term

Persons

Hiemenz, Liesel
Hiemenz, Dr. William
Briggs, Olga
Mary

Organizations

Albany City and County War Council – Albany – New York – United States
WABY – Radio Station
American Express
American Consulate
Department of State – United States Government

Subjects

World War, 1939-1945 – Switzerland
World War, 1939-1945 – Germany
World War, 1939-1945 – Great Britain
World War, 1939-1945 – United States of America
Passenger Ships – SS Athenia

Places

Berlin (Germany)—Description and travel
Lake Saranac Sanatorium – Hospital – New York State
Germany – World War, 1939-1945
Zurich Oberland (Switzerland) – World War, 1939-1945
Albany – New York – United States – World War, 1939-1945

Document Types

Letters – Correspondence – Letters of Condolence
Short Stories
Poetry – Poems
Photographs

Titles

none

Biography/History of

The majority of this collection contains stories written by Liesel Hiemenz. There are also letters of condolence in regards to the death of her father Dr. William Hiemenz in 1945; he was a prominent chemist. The Hiemenz family was from Germany and Dr. Hiemenz worked for the I. G. Farben Industry in Germany, then in 1923 he came to the US to work for Bayer and Winthrop in Rensselaer, NY.

It appears from photographs and a written account in the collection that Liesel traveled to Berlin in 1938, and she was in Munich as early as July 1937. It is unclear the reason for her being in Europe during this time, she may have been visiting family or studying. There are letters to her friend Mary, who lived in the Saranac Sanatorium (an outdoor hospital for the treatment of Tuberculosis in upstate NY) about the events at the start of World War II. One of the letters dated Aug 25, 1939; she states that this day the consul gave notice that all Americans and British citizens had to leave Germany. She had bought a ticket to Switzerland that morning, and would be leaving as soon as possible. Liesel wrote about her thoughts and feelings during the very beginning stages of the war. She spoke about the conversations she had with the people that she met on the train from Berlin to Zurich, Switzerland. Many Americans were “stuck” in Switzerland, as they had booked passage on German boats that were no longer sailing. As no boat tickets were being given out, many Americans decided to leave for Cherbourg or Amsterdam in hopes of obtaining easier passage in a harbor city.

In the same letters to her friend Mary back in the United States, Liesel recounted what she could remember of the First World War, when her family was still living in the Rhineland, in the city Elberfeld. She was only a year old when the First World War started, but she remembered many of the things she heard and saw during that time. The French occupied the Rhineland at that time, and she remembered that they had been very mean to the Germans, and that the Germans were more kindly disposed to the English Military. While she was in Europe during the beginning of the War, her parents were back in the United States. She wasn't homesick, but considering the events that were going on around her, she was anxious to be back with her family. During this time she reported daily to either the American Consulate or the American Express Company.

On Sunday September 3rd, 1939 England declared war on Germany, due to the (accidental) sinking of the passenger ship the SS Athenia by Nazi Germany. She thinks that “Hitler cannot be considered a man, he is a sign of the times. His disposition is not humane. It is above the minds of mortal men.” It is unclear the exact date which she returned to the United States, but she was in Europe through at least September 1939, and may have returned to the U.S. sometime in September or October 1939. There is a letter from the US Government, dated November 3rd, 1939, stating that her passport had been confiscated upon her return to the US and was being held by the Department of State in Washington, DC. If she wished, her passport could be returned to her, but she would not be able to use it.

She was also a prominent writer. Some of Liesel's stories were used on the WABY radio station during World War II. The stories that she wrote tended to lean towards War Propaganda. They were used to ease the minds of many Americans, and present ideas on how the American population should act in the face of the war.

Scope and Contents of the Records

The majority of this collection contains papers written by Liesel Hiemenz dealing with World War II. There are accounts of her time in Europe during the very beginning of World War II in 1939. There are stories written by Liesel used on public radio during the War, and there are letters from 1945-1946 in regards to the death of her father Dr. William Hiemenz. There are also photographs of the Hiemenz family, and a small photo album made by Liesel when she was in Europe, 1937-1939.

Organization of the Records

Related Material

None

Separated Materials

None

Other Finding Aids

None

Detailed Description of the Records

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

Series # [#] . Series Title [title]

Box #	Folder #	Item #. Title / Description
1	1	Letters About Daddy Nov 1945 (1)
1	2	Letters About Daddy Nov 1945 (2)
1	3	Various Stories, Poems, Letters
1	4	Liesel Hiemenz: Stories, etc
1	5	Photographs
1	6	Photographs
2		Oversize Photographs
2		Small Photograph Album

