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Guide to the James and Eugenia Zilboorg Papers

YCAL MSS 259



by Lisa Conathan, Lucretia Baskin

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 259

CREATOR: Zilboorg, James, 1892-1968

TITLE: James and Eugenia Zilboorg papers

DATES: 1898-2015

BULK DATES: 1898-1972

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 6.22 linear feet (11 boxes)

LANGUAGE: Primarily in Russian and English. Some letters are in German, Spanish and Yiddish.

SUMMARY: The James and Eugenia Zilboorg Papers consist of family correspondence, business correspondence, other personal papers, photographs and printed material documenting the life of James and Eugenia Zilboorg and their families. The two largest groups of letters are between James and Eugenia Zilboorg and between the Zilboorgs and the Gel'fman family. In addition to these two large groups of correspondence, there are letters from other family members and friends, including the Zil'burg family of Kyiv. Of particular interest is James' early correspondence with his brother Gregory Zilboorg, who served as a Minister in the governments of Aleksandr Kerenskii and Georgii L'vov before emigrating to the United States and becoming a psychoanalyst and historian of psychiatry. The collection also contains one box of printed material related to revolutionary Russian politics (1898-1927) and one box of other papers which include family photographs, ephemera and collected documents relating to revolutionary Russian politics.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.zilboorgj>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.zilboorgj>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box

f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Natalie Fiess, 1992.

May 2016 Acquisition: Gift of Olga Zilboorg, 2016.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The James and Eugenia Zilboorg Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

James and Eugenia Zilboorg Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Associated Materials

[Gregory Zilboorg Papers, YCAL MSS 258](#)

James and Eugenia Zilboorg

James Zilboorg was born Jakov Movshevich Zil'burg in Kyiv, September 3, 1892. Eugenia Zilboorg was born Evgenia Minaevna Gel'fman in Kyiv in the 1890s. James emigrated to the U.S. in 1914 and Eugenia followed in 1915. They became American citizens but lived for many years in Mexico. Several of James and Eugenia's family members also emigrated from Kyiv, going to Denmark, France, Danzig, Palestine, New York and joining them in Mexico.

The Gel'fman name is also spelled Gelfman, Helfman and Helfmann. The Zil'burg name is Americanized as Zilboorg.

In 1914 James began a lifelong career in engineering working for Westinghouse Corporation in Pittsburgh. He later worked for their international subsidiary in Mexico and for other international and Mexican companies in the electrical power industry. In 1961 James retired and the couple moved to Long Island, where James died in 1968.

Menashe Khaimovich Gel'fman, Eugenia's father, ran export and trade businesses in Kyiv and Danzig, dealing in such products as flour, sugar, tobacco and wine. Eugenia's siblings include Minia (who emigrated to France and married a woman named Evgenia), Emma Andersen (who emigrated to Denmark and married Kai Andersen), IUzia (who emigrated to Haifa, Palestine and eventually to New York and married a woman named Hilda), Sofia Spektareva (who remained in Russia and worked in education), Vera (who lived with the Zilboorgs in Mexico before marrying Oleg Saitcevitky) and Liza.

James's parents, Moshe M. Zil'burg and wife, also emigrated to Mexico and lived in Mexico City. Siblings of James include Esther Levitas (who emigrated to Mexico and married Solomon Levitas), Gregory (who emigrated to New York and became a notable scholar of psychoanalysis) and Basia Osherov. For further details about the life and work of Gregory Zilboorg, readers may consult the [Gregory Zilboorg Papers, YCAL MSS 258](#).

James and Eugenia Zilboorg had three daughters: Natalie Fiess, Olga Irvine and Lydia Cato.

Scope and Contents

The James and Eugenia Zilboorg Papers document the experience of a middle class Jewish family in Kyiv that emigrates to the United States, Mexico and Palestine. The papers consist of family correspondence, business correspondence, other personal papers, photographs and printed material documenting the life of James and Eugenia Zilboorg and their families. The two largest groups of letters are between James and Eugenia Zilboorg and between the Zilboorgs and the Gel'fman family.

Letters between James and Eugenia Zilboorg document their life together including the details of their emigration from Kyiv and the management of their family affairs. James often traveled on business and many of his letters were written during these travels. The letters are addressed not only to Eugenia, but to their daughters and to Eugenia's sister Vera and mother.

Letters between the Zilboorgs and the Gel'fman family document the details of the lives of Gel'fman and Zilboorg family members. They provide details about the families' struggle to thrive during and after the Russian revolutionary period, emigrate, and begin new lives abroad. The families strove to maintain a daily intimacy through their correspondence and their letters provide a personal record of the Jewish emigration experience in the early twentieth century. They also include details of the various businesses that the Gel'fman family managed.

In addition to these two large groups of correspondence, there are letters from other family members and friends, including the Zil'burg family of Kyiv. Of particular interest is James' early correspondence with his brother Gregory. Gregory struggled to continue his education during the Revolution and in 1917 served as secretary to the Minister of Labor in the governments of Georgii L'vov and Aleksandr Kerenskii.

Besides correspondence, the collection contains one box of printed material related to revolutionary Russian politics (1898-1927) and one box of other papers which include family photographs, ephemera and collected documents relating to revolutionary Russian politics.

Arrangement

The collection is organized into four series: I. Correspondence, circa 1910-1972. II. Other Papers, 1898-1968. III. Printed Material, 1899-1923. IV. May 2016 acquisition, 1913-2015.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, circa 1910-1972

2.92 linear feet (7 boxes)

Russian

Family correspondence documents the lives of the Zilboorg and Gel'fman families. Most of the letters date from 1913 to 1940. Almost all of the letters filed under James Zilboorg are addressed to Eugenia Zilboorg and vice versa.

Business correspondence relates to James Zilboorg's personal business. Topics addressed include job applications, letters of recommendation and James's resume.

A few letters are accompanied by English translations, as noted in folder notes. The translations are by an unknown person (possibly Natalie Fiess or another member of the Zilboorg family) in the 1990s.

Third party correspondence related to Russian revolutionary politics and collected by James and Eugenia is filed in [Other Papers](#).

The series is organized into two subseries: Family correspondence and Business correspondence. Family correspondence is arranged alphabetically. Business correspondence is arranged chronologically.

Family Correspondence

b. 1, f. 1	"A" general	1914-1948
b. 1, f. 2	Anderson, Emma (née Gel'fman) and Kai See also: Gel'fman family and Gel'fman family	1921-1971, undated
b. 1, f. 3	Bashkirov, K.	undated
b. 1, f. 4	Bass, Samuel and Lisa	1931-1954
b. 1, f. 5	Beizman, Boris IA.	1914-1934
b. 1, f. 6	Braunstein, David	1910s, 1927, undated
b. 1, f. 7	Breslow, Sylvia (née Sherman)	1914-1924
b. 1, f. 8	Brylowicz, Stanislaw	1924-1925
b. 1, f. 9	El', Aleksandr	1914-1915
b. 1, f. 10	l'Etienne, Margarita	1922
b. 1, f. 11	Fiess, Natalie (née Zilboorg) and Olga Irvine (née Zilboorg)	1942-1943
b. 1, f. 12	Fiess, Natalie (née Zilboorg) and Edward	1942-1947
b. 1, f. 13	"G" general	1920, 1930
b. 1, f. 14	Gel'fman, IUzia See also: Gel'fman family and Gel'fman family	1910s-1935, undated
b. 1, f. 15	Gel'fman, Liza See also: Gel'fman family and Gel'fman family	1916, undated

Family Correspondence (continued)

b. 1, f. 16	Gel'fman, Minia and Evgenia See also: Gel'fman family and Gel'fman family	1923-1971
b. 1, f. 17-24	Gel'fman family Yiddish	1910s-1919
b. 2, f. 25-33	Gel'fman family	1920s-1936, undated
b. 2, f. 34	"H" general	1915, 1920
b. 2, f. 35	Irvine, Olga (née Zilboorg)	1946-1946
b. 2, f. 36	"K" general	1932, 1938, undated
b. 2, f. 37	"L" general	1913-1930
b. 2, f. 38	Lahm, Polina	1941-1943, undated
b. 2, f. 39	Levee, Irina (née Gel'fman) and Lazar' See also: Gel'fman family and Gel'fman family	1923-1925, undated
b. 2, f. 40	Levitas, Esther (née Zil'burg) and Solomon See also: Zil'burg family	1913-1937, undated
b. 2, f. 41	Lichtenshtein, Nadia and Izakil'	1933-1947
b. 2, f. 42	"M" general Yiddish	1912-1966
b. 2, f. 43	Nisenbaum, Fishel' Yiddish	1922
b. 2, f. 44	Osherov, Basia (née Zil'burg) See also: Zil'burg family	1914-1922, undated
b. 3, f. 45	"P" general	undated
b. 3, f. 46	"R" general	1911-1927
b. 3, f. 47	Rosaler, Jean and Akim	1921-1927
b. 3, f. 48	"S" general	1917-1923
b. 3, f. 49	Saitcevsy, Oleg	1931-1942
b. 3, f. 50-59	Saitcevsy, Vera (née Gel'fman) and Oleg Includes some letters to James and Eugenia Zilboorg from their children See also: Gel'fman family and Gel'fman family	1922-1942, undated
b. 3, f. 60	Sherman, Belle	1916
b. 3, f. 61	Sherman, Lillian	1914-1916, undated

Family Correspondence (continued)

b. 3, f. 62-63	Spektareva, Sofia (née Gel'fman) See also: Gel'fman family and Gel'fman family	1915-1972, undated
b. 3, f. 64	"T" general	1913, undated
b. 3, f. 65	Theiss, George	1913-1914
b. 3, f. 66	"V" general	1919, 1930s
b. 3, f. 67	Wousild, Frieda	1915
b. 3, f. 68	Zaitsevskii, M. and N.	1932-1937
b. 3, f. 69	Zilboorg, Carolyn	undated
b. 4, f. 70-82	Zilboorg, Eugenia	1913-1944
b. 5, f. 83	Zilboorg, Eugenia	undated (1940s)
b. 5, f. 84	Zilboorg, Eugenia	undated
b. 5, f. 85	Zilboorg, Eugenia, outgoing to Gel'fman family and to Boria	1916-1918
b. 5, f. 86-92	Zilboorg, Gregory, incoming and outgoing English	1915-1959
b. 5, f. 93-97	Zilboorg, James English	1914-1922
b. 6, f. 98-109	Zilboorg, James Includes one letter to Vera and Oleg Saitcevsy, 1942	1923-1947
b. 6, f. 110	Zilboorg, James	undated (1920s)
b. 7, f. 111	Zilboorg, James	undated (1930s)
b. 7, f. 112	Zilboorg, James	undated (1940s)
b. 7, f. 113-114	Zilboorg, James	undated
b. 7, f. 115	Zilboorg, James, outgoing to Irina, Evelyn and Zil'burg family English	1916, 1921, undated
b. 7, f. 116	Zil'burg family Yiddish	1914-1931
b. 7, f. 117	General correspondence identified by first name only, A-Z	1913-1954, undated
b. 7, f. 118	_____, Liuba	1965, undated
b. 7, f. 119	_____, Liza	1915-1923
b. 7, f. 120	_____, Sarra	undated
b. 7, f. 121	_____, Volodia	1918
b. 7, f. 122	_____, Volodia	1929-1940

Family Correspondence (continued)

b. 7, f. 123	Letters with illegible signatures Yiddish Arranged chronologically	1914-1942, undated
b. 7, f. 124	Unsigned letters Several of these letters are incomplete Arranged chronologically	1915-1924, undated
b. 7, f. 125	Invitations, announcements and calling cards	1949, 1954, undated
b. 7, f. 126	Unaddressed postcards	undated
b. 7, f. 127	Envelopes	1923, 1925, undated
b. 7, f. 128	Notes Includes brief notes which could not be associated with a particular letter and notes on Zilboorg family history	undated
	Business Correspondence	1914-1966
b. 7, f. 129	Zilboorg, Eugenia, letters of recommendation	1918, 1920
b. 7, f. 130	Zilboorg, James A job application to the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1939, includes a photograph of James Zilboorg Arranged chronologically; some letters are bound into reverse-chronological packets	1914-1966

Series II: Other Papers, 1898-1968*0.21 linear feet (1 box)*

Other papers include educational records, ephemera, photographs, personal papers and newspaper clippings. Also included is a collection of documents related to the politics of the Russian revolutionary period, which includes some third party correspondence.

Series II is arranged chronologically.

b. 8, f. 131	Bank notes from Russia, Finland and Germany	1898-1922
b. 8, f. 132	Educational records of James Zilboorg	1908-1914
b. 8, f. 133	Educational records of Eugenia Zilboorg	1910, 1920
b. 8, f. 134	Lesson book of Eugenia Zilboorg	1911-1912
	"Political action"	
	Poster, "Den' kolosa rzhi [Day of the sheaf of rye]" Stored in: Oversize Box 9, folder 160	1912 March 6
b. 8, f. 135	Cablegram announcing the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, copy	1917 8/21 March
b. 8, f. 136	Cablegrams to President Kerenskii, copies One cablegram is accompanied by an English translation	[1917]
b. 8, f. 137	Third party correspondence related to George V. Lomonosoff	1918
b. 8, f. 138	Correspondence related to a letter to the editor of <i>Russkoe Slovo</i>	1919
b. 8, f. 139	Third party correspondence related to Russian Ambassador Boris Bakhmetev	1919
b. 8, f. 140	Correspondence related to Russian income tax law	1910s
b. 8, f. 141	Other papers and one clipping relating to Russian Revolutionary politics	1910s
b. 8, f. 142	Family photographs	1914-1943, undated
b. 8, f. 143	Sketch of a baby, in pencil, probably by James Zilboorg	1922
b. 8, f. 144	Newspaper clippings Also stored in: Oversize Box 9, folder 161 Includes "Fortælling fra den russiske Revolution," an article in Danish by Kai Andersen.	1939, 1944, undated
b. 8, f. 145	Russian grammar notes	1944
b. 8, f. 146	Concert programs	1951, undated
b. 8, f. 147	Obituary notices of James Zilboorg	1968

Series III: Printed Material, 1899-1923*0.42 linear feet (1 box)*

Printed material relates to the politics of the Russian revolutionary period. A few of the monographs are incomplete.

Series III is organized into two Subseries: Serials and Monographs. Both are arranged alphabetically by title of work.

Serials

b. 9, f. 148	<i>Nakanune</i> . London. Issues 1-12.	1899
b. 9, f. 149	<i>Nakanune</i> . London. Issues 13-16, 19, 21, 22, 24.	1900
b. 9, f. 150	<i>Revoliutsionnaia Rossia</i> . Issues 20 and 25.	1903
b. 9, f. 151	<i>Revoliutsionnaia Rossia</i> . Issues 43, 48, 51, 53, 55-57.	1904
b. 9, f. 152	<i>Revoliutsionnaia Rossia</i> . Paris. Issues 58, 60, 61, 65, 67, 68, 71-75.	1905
b. 9, f. 153	<i>Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik</i> . Berlin. Issue 8-9.	1923

Monographs

b. 9, f. 154	<i>La Révolution Russe et la Paix</i> This volume does not have a cover or title page	undated
b. 9, f. 155	<i>Sovety i Sovetskaia Vlast' v Rosii</i> , by K.M. Oberuchev. New York: Knigoizdatel'stvo Narodopravstvo.	1919
b. 9, f. 156	<i>Sovremennyi Moment v Otsenke Partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov</i> . Paris.	1919
b. 9, f. 157	<i>Sushchnost' Sotsializma</i> , by A. Shefle with commentary by P. Lavrov. Published by Vl. Raspopov.	1906
b. 9, f. 158	Untitled, heading on first page reads "Novye Politicheskie Protsessy" This volume does not have a cover or title page	undated

Oversize*2.08 linear feet (1 box)*

b. 10, f. 159	Poster, "Den' kolosa rzhi [Day of the sheaf of rye]" (Series III)	1912 March 6
b. 10, f. 160	Newspaper clippings (Series III)	1939

Series IV: May 2016 acquisition, 1913–2015*1 linear foot (1 box)*

This series contains letters, postcards, and telegrams documenting the personal lives of members of the Zilboorg family between 1913 and 1954. The correspondence is chiefly between James and Eugenia Zilboorg, and includes letters relating to Eugenia's departure from Kyiv in 1915 and James's move to Mexico in 1924; letters to Eugenia written while James traveled on business to locations in the United States and Canada in the 1920s-1930s; and letters to James from Eugenia when she traveled to Gdańsk, Poland in the 1920s. Also included are letters to Eugenia from her parents in Haifa, Palestine; correspondence with James and Eugenia's daughters, James's brother Gregory Zilboorg, and other family members; four family photographs; and a printed handbill relating to a synagogue in Haifa. Also included in this series are photocopies of two letters and an autograph by George Gershwin; the originals were owned by Olga Zilboorg's son, Dr. Thomas Irvine. A few letters are accompanied by transcriptions and English translations.

Arranged chronologically.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Emigration and immigration -- Mexico
Emigration and immigration -- Russia
Emigration and immigration -- Ukraine
Jewish diaspora

Geographic Names

Soviet Union -- History -- Revolution, 1917-1921

Genres / Formats

Photographs

Names

Zilboorg, Eugenia, 1894-1973
Zilboorg, Gregory, 1890-1959
Zilboorg, James, 1892-1968

Families

Gel'fman family
Zil'burg family

Contributors

Zilboorg, James, 1892-1968
Zilboorg, Eugenia, 1894-1973