

M1942

RECORDS CONCERNING THE
CENTRAL COLLECTING POINTS (“ARDELIA HALL COLLECTION”):
OFFENBACH ARCHIVAL DEPOT, 1946–1951

National Archives and Records Administration
Washington, DC
2004

Library info

INTRODUCTION

On the 13 rolls of this microfilm publication, M1942, are reproduced the records of the Offenbach Archival Depot. These consist of administrative records, cultural object restitution and custody records, correspondence relating to restitution claims, monthly reports, and photographs of library bookplates and markings. The Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) Section transferred Nazi-looted works of art and artifacts from various storage areas and shipped the objects to one of four U.S. central collecting points including Offenbach. In order to research restitution claims, the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) officers gathered intelligence reports, interrogation reports, captured documents, and general information regarding German art looting. This microfilm publication includes a portion of the records that comprise the "Ardelia Hall Collection." The entire collection is located in the Records of United States Occupation Headquarters, World War II, Record Group (RG) 260.

BACKGROUND

The basic authority for taking custody of property in Germany was contained in Joint Chief of Staff (JCS) Directive 1067/6, which directed the U.S. Zone Commander to "impound or block" certain specified categories of property, including those of the German Reich; the Nazi Party and affiliated organizations and their prominent members; and absentee owners of non-German nationality, including United Nations and neutral governments and individuals. The American Zone Commander was also required to impound all property that was transferred under duress or through wrongful acts of confiscation, disposition, or spoliation, and to block the relocation of works of art and cultural material of value or importance, regardless of its ownership. When the U.S. Army entered Germany in September 1944, provisions were made for the seizure of all categories of property, including that of the Nazi Party organization.

At the cessation of hostilities in May 1945, a number of temporary collecting points were set up by the 12th Army Group to store all cultural objects found in the U.S. zone in need of preservation or suspected of having been looted by the Germans. The seized property was turned over to the custody of the Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany) [OMGUS] when it became the successor to the U.S. Group Control Council, Germany (USGCC) on October 1, 1945. OMGUS was responsible for administering the U.S. zone of occupation and U.S. sector of Berlin, and for functioning as U.S. element of organizations comprising the Allied Control Authority, the name given to the four-power occupation control system.

Within OMGUS, the seized works of art eventually came under the control of the Property Division. The Property Division, established in March 1948, was created as the result of a reorganization of OMGUS functions related to finance, the economy, transport, communications, restitution, reparations, decartelization, and property control. The primary responsibility of the Property Division was to formulate and implement policies required in the fields of property control, German external assets, internal and external restitution, and reparations.

By 1946 only four of the collecting points remained and were located in Munich, Wiesbaden, Marburg, and Offenbach. After June 15, 1946, when the Marburg Central Collecting Point was closed, the remaining three central collecting points (CCPs) became specialized.

The Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point held mostly German-owned material, especially that of the former Prussian State Museums, the Staedel Institute of Frankfurt, and the local museums of Wiesbaden, plus a certain amount of internal loot (materials confiscated from German nationals) and objects subject to restitution. At its height, this installation contained approximately 700,000 objects.

The Munich Central Collecting Point specialized largely in materials subject to restitution, although in addition it contained the cultural objects of the Bavarian State Museums. At its height, this central collecting point held in excess of a million objects.

The third of the specialized CCPs, the Offenbach Archival Depot, was devoted primarily to Jewish religious items, books, and archives. It handled more than 2½ million objects during its four years of operation.

The transition from military to civilian occupation administration was initiated by the Presidential appointment of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany (HICOG) who assumed his duties on September 2, 1949. OMGUS organizations were progressively abolished and all functions transferred to HICOG organizations between June and September 1949. The Offenbach Archival Depot was closed in June 1949. Upon the termination of the Property Division on July 1, 1949, the property control functions with respect to the liquidation of claims devolved on the Central German Property Control Agency in Munich. Its directorate was composed of the four Land Civilian Agency Heads in the U.S. zone. The transition was completed by September 21, 1949, the same day of the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany. OMGUS was formally abolished on December 5, 1949.

The Munich and Wiesbaden CCPs closed in August 1951, although some cultural objects remained at both facilities under U.S. control after that date. The Office of Public Affairs of the Office of the High Commissioner for Germany exercised residual restitution authority for these objects. Most of the OMGUS records, including the records of the Property Division, were retired to an Army record center in Kansas City until they were accessioned into the National Archives in the early 1960s.

During the period in which the CCPs operated, they administered the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Sections of Bavaria, Bremen, Hesse, and Württemberg-Baden. They also received policy guidance from the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section of OMGUS general headquarters. The composition of the records of the CCPs is unique among the records of OMGUS headquarters. The Offices of Military Government for Bavaria and Hesse created most of the records concerning the CCPs through their restitution and preservation programs from 1945 to 1949, but they also contain records of monuments and fine arts officers assigned to Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) and U.S. Forces, European Theater Headquarters; records of Headquarters,

Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany)[OMGUS]; records of the Office of the High Commissioner for Germany; and some papers added to various files by the State Department's Arts and Monuments Adviser, Ardelia Hall, while the records were on "loan" to her from 1954 to 1961. Because Ms. Hall worked extensively with these records, which were combined into one body, they are referred to as the "Ardelia Hall Collection."

The records of the CCPs document the preservation of monuments and fine arts and the restitution of cultural objects by OMGUS and, much less adequately, the administration of the preservation and restitution program. A significant portion of this documentation is in German. In order to research restitution claims, monuments and fine arts officers gathered together intelligence reports, interrogation reports, captured documents, and other records concerning fine arts and monuments in Europe. These research files constitute a considerable portion of the records. Included among these records are reports and original documents detailing the looting of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR), the involvement of Hermann Goering in the cultural looting, and plans for the proposed "Hitler Museum" in Linz, Austria.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication are in two formats: textual records and black-and-white photographs of library bookplates and markings. The textual records are the administrative records, cultural object restitution and custody records, correspondence relating to restitution claims, and monthly reports. In order to produce the highest quality microfilm image, the library bookplates and markings appear slightly larger than the original for greater clarity and readability.

Textual Records

The first series, Administrative Records, 1945–1949, consists of correspondence, memorandums, procedures, and reports relating to the administration of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) program at Offenbach. Also included in this series are records from the Office of the Military Governor outlining the Depot's responsibilities concerning restitution. This series is arranged by type of record or subject.

The second series, Cultural Object Restitution and Custody Records, 1946–1951, consists of the following: in-shipments receipts dated 1946–1949 that are arranged alphabetically by place of origin of the shipment; receipts for final shipments to the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point in 1949; receipts for restitution out-shipments dated 1946–1951 that are arranged alphabetically by name of country, German and American military government authorities, or Jewish organization; and a list of sheet music. Among the external restitution out-shipment receipts are those of the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. (JCR) and the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO). OMGUS delivered to the JCR all Jewish cultural and religious objects that were alienated from their owners by the Nazis and for which individual owners could not be determined. The JCR acted as the trustee of these objects for all Jewish people, distributing them to appropriate institutions.

The third series, Correspondence Relating to Restitution Claims, 1946–1950, consists of correspondence concerning restitution claims including letters received from claimants, letters sent to claimants, and correspondence resulting from actions taken on behalf of claimants.

The fourth series, Monthly Reports, March 1946–August 1947, consists of reports providing detailed information on the administration of the Depot and the progress of the restitution of objects in the Depot’s custody. The reports have numerous enclosures, such as floor plans, organizational charts, staff changes, visitors, and lists of library collections that the Depot’s staff had sorted and identified in a particular month. The reports are arranged chronologically by date.

Photographs

Photographs of the Operations of the Offenbach Archival Depot, ca. 1945 [260-PHOAD], is arranged by subject.¹ The images were taken or acquired by the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) Section of the Office of Military Government for Germany (OMGUS). These four albums consist of photographs that show administrative and everyday work activities of the Offenbach Archival Depot including inspection of transportation vehicles, daily office activities of secretaries and clerks, and supervision of working personnel in the depot; administrative and academic personnel examining rare Jewish manuscripts and books; unidentifiable loot from Jewish synagogues; and ERR activities in various parts of Europe including Germany, Holland, France, Belgium, USSR, and the Baltic States. The photographs have captions in English and German.

Photographs of Library Markings from Looted Books, Made by the Offenbach Archival Depot, ca. 1945 [260-LM], were taken by the Offenbach Archival Depot as a record of the multiplicity of institutions and private owners from whom books were seized by the Nazis during World War II. These albums contain library markings from both Eastern and Western Europe, and include examples from Great Britain and the United States as well. Countries represented include Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Palestine, the Ukraine, and White Russia (Belorussia). Organizations and institutions represented in these photographs include the Jewish Welfare Board of New York, the United Workers’ Cooperative Association, the U.S. Library of Congress, and numerous Jewish historical and cultural organizations throughout Europe. Included are sections devoted to library markings from Catholic and Jewish libraries and individuals. A breakdown of the contents of each album is as follows: Album I includes private library markings, arranged alphabetically by surname of individual or name of library. Call numbers for the books are written beside each photograph. Sections devoted to markings from Jewish and Catholic libraries follow. Album II includes markings from Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia to Yugoslavia). These are arranged alphabetically by country, then numerically thereunder. Album III includes markings from the United States and Western Europe (America to Switzerland). Sections entitled “Stamps” and “Monograms” follow. These photographs are also arranged alphabetically by country and thereunder numerically. Album IV includes

¹ Series designators for photograph collections at the National Archives consist of the series title with a date span and record group number with an acronym or other devised abbreviation, shown here in brackets.

markings from Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia to Latvia) and duplicates the contents of Album II. Album V includes markings from Eastern Europe (Lithuania to Yugoslavia) and also duplicates the contents of Album II. Album VI includes markings from Western Europe and duplicates Album III. There are no negatives for this series.

Photographs of "Ex Libris" Library Bookplates, taken by the Offenbach Archival Depot, ca. 1945 [260-XL], were produced by the Offenbach Archival Depot, the primary shipment center for artworks from the Marburg and Wiesbaden Central Collecting Points in the Office of Military Government for Hesse. The photographs were produced from vast collections of books seized by the ERR and other Nazi organizations during World War II. These photos record the variety of artistic designs used for bookplates in Europe, especially Germany, before World War II. Examples of religious themes, political symbols (including swastikas), classical motifs, and Art Deco and other modern styles are all found in these photos. While the majority of the bookplates are German, there are also examples from Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands. Included among these bookplates are examples from the various members of the Rothschild family in France, who amassed a large collection of artworks.

RELATED RECORDS

Textual Records in the National Archives

GENERAL RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, RG 59

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Records Maintained by the Fine Arts and Monuments Adviser 1945–1961 (“Ardelia Hall Collection”) (Lot File 62D-4) [A1, Entry 3104A]²

RECORDS OF THE AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION AND SALVAGE OF ARTISTIC AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS IN WAR AREAS, 1943–1946, RG 239

RECORDS OF U.S. OCCUPATION HEADQUARTERS, WORLD WAR II, RG 260

Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany) [OMGUS]

Property Division, Reparations and Restitutions Branch

Records of the Museum, Fine Arts, and Archives Section (MFAA), 1946–1948

Includes a duplicate of the series Photographs of “Ex Libris” Library Bookplates, taken by the Offenbach Archival Depot, ca. 1945

Property Division, Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”)

OMGUS Headquarters Records, 1938–1951

Records of the Marburg Central Collecting Point, 1945–1949

Records of the Munich Central Collecting Point, 1945–1951

Records of the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945–1952

Miscellaneous Property Reports, 1945–1948

² Textual record series designators usually consist of the series title with a date span, the finding aid notation, and the Master Location Register (MLR) entry number, shown here in brackets.

National Archives Accessioned Microfilm

RECORDS OF U.S. OCCUPATION HEADQUARTERS, WORLD WAR II, RG 260

Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (Germany)[OMGUS]

Property Division, Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”)

Selected Microfilm Reproductions and Related Records, 1945–1949

Special Media Records in the National Archives

RECORDS OF U.S. OCCUPATION HEADQUARTERS, WORLD WAR II, RG 260

Photographs of Artworks Appropriated by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) in France, 1940–1944 [260-ERR]

Includes photographs of artworks from the collections of various members of the Rothschild family in France.

Photographs Taken by the Munich Central Collecting Point, OMGUS, of Artworks Appropriated by Germany during World War II, 1945–1947 [260-MP]

Also includes photographs of artworks from the collections of various members of the Rothschild family in France.

National Archives Microfilm Publications

M1782, *OSS Art Looting Investigation Unit Reports, 1945–46*

National Archives Publications

Researchers should also consult *Holocaust-Era Assets: A Finding Aid to Records at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland*, compiled by Greg Bradsher (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1999). This finding aid includes information on specific areas within military records, such as War Department and Occupation records, as well as civilian records, such as those of the State Department, that contain information on looted assets.

Additional information concerning the Holocaust may be located on our web site at www.archives.gov.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROLL	CONTENTS
1	Administrative Records, 1945–1949 <i>From:</i> 1946 Correspondence OAD [Offenbach Archival Depot] <i>To:</i> 1949 Correspondence OAD
2	<i>From:</i> Dr. Ernst Grummach (correspondence) <i>To:</i> Personnel
3	<i>From:</i> Policy <i>To:</i> Offenbach Archival Depot Files: 1946–49, Security
4	Cultural Object Restitution and Custody Records, 1946–1951 <i>From:</i> In-Shipments [Offenbach], A–K <i>To:</i> Movement to Wiesbaden
5	<i>From:</i> AJDC [American Joint Distribution Committee], OAD 1 <i>To:</i> Hungary OAD 10
6	<i>From:</i> JRSO [Jewish Restitution Successor Organization] OAD 11 <i>To:</i> Yugoslavia OAD 19
7	<i>From:</i> Czechoslovakia or Austria collection of music notes (5,560 volumes), No. 42119 <i>To:</i> Czechoslovakia or Austria collection of music notes (5,560 volumes), No.42222.
8	Correspondence Relating to Restitution Claims, 1946–1950 <i>From:</i> Correspondence, 1946–1950 <i>To:</i> [Dr. Fritz] Flersheim, New York, 1950
9	Claims, German institutions. Monthly Reports, March 1946–August 1947 <i>From:</i> Monthly reports of the OAD, March 1946 <i>To:</i> Monthly reports of the OAD, September 1946
10	<i>From:</i> Monthly reports of the OAD, October 1946 <i>To:</i> Monthly reports of the OAD, August 1947
11	Photographs of the Operations of the Offenbach Archival Depot, ca. 1945 [260-PHOAD] Photographs of Library Markings from Looted Books, Made by the Offenbach Archival Depot, ca. 1945 [260-LM] Album I
12	<i>From:</i> Album II <i>To:</i> Album VI
13	Photographs of “Ex Libris” Library Bookplates, taken by the Offenbach Archival Depot, ca. 1945 [260-XL]