
Please join us at 6:00 p.m. on
Sunday, May 5, 2024

YOM HASHOAH 5784

VERSCHLEPPT

**The Carrying Off of
Markus and Anna Mattes**

A Telling and Showing of their
Letters, Photographs, and
Documents

Presentation by
John Mattes and
Debbi Nitekman Kohl

Told mostly in the written words of
Markus and Anna, the presentation
will include slides of the family's
letters, photographs, and documents.
It will also include music from the
Shoah performed by Debbi on piano
and her son, Daniel Katz, of the
Chicago Symphony Orchestra, on cello.

Mincha, Ma'ariv, and the Yom HaShoah
memorial service will be observed
at 7:30 p.m.

A reception will immediately follow in the
Rissman Kol Ami Museum.

The Rissman Kol Ami Collection is a unique
collection of Jewish art, artifacts and ritual
objects. In addition to preserving significant
objects for posterity, the museum seeks to
develop programs and exhibitions that are
designed to educate the congregation and
promote an appreciation for works of Judaica.

North Suburban Synagogue

Beth El
בית כנסת בית אל

Rissman Kol Ami Collection

1175 Sheridan Road, Highland Park 60035

***Witness to the
Holocaust:
The Mattes
Family Letters***



April – May, 2024

**The Rissman Kol Ami Collection at
North Suburban Synagogue Beth El**

Witness to the Holocaust: The Mattes Family Letters

Markus and Anna Mattes, maternal grandparents of long-time Beth El member Stephen Nitekman, were murdered by the Nazis before he was born. Stephen, his siblings, and his cousins always knew that, but they knew almost nothing else about their grandparents. They were never told anything; they never asked anything. Some knew not to ask. Some were told never to ask.

However, when Stephen's uncle was nearing 80 years of age, 50 years after emigrating from the German Reich, he showed the family a hundred pages of letters Markus and Anna had written him. And a few years ago, after the deaths of Stephen's parents, he discovered in a box of their possessions another hundred pages of letters.

Through these letters, Stephen, his siblings, and his cousins came to know their grandparents and how faith and family sustained them. They came to better know their parents and themselves, their family's story, and their own story. And they came to better know the importance for each of us to tell our story and to hear each other's story.

This exhibition shares the story of Markus and Anna, who moved to Mainz, Germany, in 1908 to raise their family. Through the family pictures, documents, maps, and first-hand accounts in letters written by members of the Mattes family, we learn of the couple's witness to the beginnings of the Holocaust, and their desperate attempts to escape Nazi Germany and join their children who found a home in the Quad Cities. These attempts, which ultimately failed, are haunting and echo the experience of many Jewish families during this time. The story of the Mattes family, as told through their own words from 1938-1941, honors the memory of those who did not survive.

Also on display in this exhibit are items discovered and acquired since 2015 by the Nitekman family. The family knew that the Nieteckmann brothers – on Stephen's paternal side – owned and operated a distillery in Mainz, but very few details were known about the specific products that were produced. Thanks to the internet, the family was able to make connections with collectors in Germany and elsewhere and acquired the items displayed here – glass water bottles with the company name and logo, a shot glass, a product label, and a promotional stamp. While much more is unknown than known about the company, these artifacts offer glimpses into the business ventures of the Nieteckmann brothers.



The Nieteckmann brothers produced Magenwärmer (literally translated as “Stomach Warmer”), a liquor that is infused with spices, under the Sanema brand