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## Philatelic Tidbits

# Holocaust Mail Exhibit in Massachusetts

September 25, 2010 [Allen](#) [No comments](#)

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While I haven't been able to see the exhibit as it is now, I did have the privilege of viewing the original exhibit as assembled by Ken Lawrence at WESTPEX a few years ago. It was spectacular then (not to mention heart-rending), and one can only assume that it's even better now that it has been enhanced to include items outside of the philatelic realm. If you should happen to be in or around Mount Hermon during this time, I would highly recommend making an effort to see this exhibit.



### Early Concentration Camp Mail

(Mount Hermon, MA) — “The Nazi Scourge: Postal Evidence of the Holocaust and the Devastation of Europe,” an award-winning exhibit of over 300 pieces of World War II era mail and documents related to the Nazis attempted extermination of Jews and others, will be publicly displayed for the first time in Massachusetts. The exhibit focuses on envelopes, post cards, letters, specially- designated stationery used exclusively by concentration camp inmates, Jewish ghetto residents and prisoners of war.

It will be displayed for students, faculty and invited groups at the Northfield Mount Hermon School in Mount Hermon, Massachusetts ([www.nmhschool.org](http://www.nmhschool.org)), September 29 to October 6, 2010, as part of a week-long colloquium about the Holocaust. Additional information is available from the school by calling (413) 498-3233 (413) 498-3233 .

The exhibit is owned by the Illinois-based Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation which has been acquiring these extraordinary items for their expanding Spungen Holocaust Collection to preserve and offer them for public use at Holocaust and genocide educational venues around the world.

The initial 250 items in the exhibit were acquired in 2008 from noted researcher, writer and collector, Ken Lawrence, of Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, a former Vice President of the American Philatelic Society. Lawrence began assembling the material in 1978, and exhibits of his collection won awards and medals at stamp shows including an international exhibition in Washington, DC in 2006.

Since purchasing Lawrence's exhibit intact, hundreds of additional historic items have been acquired or donated on behalf of the Spungen Holocaust Collection.

"Among the most heartbreaking artifacts and historical evidence of Nazi desecration are torn fragments of hand-written Hebrew parchment from Bible scrolls (Tanakh) that were used by German soldiers to wrap parcels or letters then sent through the mail," said Daniel Spungen, a member of the board of the Spungen Family Foundation.

"Four remnants of Holy Scripture used by Nazis as postal envelopes are known today, and our foundation owns three of them for exhibits and research by scholars."

After recently examining the pillaged scroll fragments used as envelopes for mail during the war, Dr. Michael Berenbaum, a distinguished Holocaust scholar and a professor at American Jewish University, stated: "It is visceral and visual documentation of the perpetrator's decision to not only destroy the Jews, but to also demean, dishonor and humiliate their culture in the process. One feels like ripping one's clothing and mourning in sackcloth and ashes when one sees such a depravity."

In addition to the Bible scroll fragments used for wrapping letters and parcels, the collection includes:

- Rare examples of mail sent to prisoners and mail sent between inmates at different camps;
- A card sent by an inmate at Dachau soon after it opened in 1933 is among the earliest known prisoner mail from any Nazi concentration camp;
- An October 3, 1943 letter to his parents in Rzeszów, Poland from Eduard Pys, a 21 year old who arrived on the first transport at the Auschwitz concentration camp in May 1940;
- The only known surviving piece of mail sent by Rabbi, Leo Baeck, the leader of German Jewry (Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden), while he was confined to the Theresienstadt ghetto;

- Mail secretly carried by children through the sewers of Warsaw during the 1944 uprising;
- Mail clandestinely carried from Nazi-occupied Poland to the exhibit Polish Navy headquarters in London and to a Jewish resistance leader in Switzerland;
- A December 1945 postal card addressed to Dr. Eugen von Haagen, a Nazi war criminal on trial after the war at Nuremberg, that is the only recorded example of the censor mark of the International Military Tribunal.

Some of the ghetto and concentration camp letters have coded or hidden messages about the plight of the senders. Research about the postal materials has led to discovery of a previously unreported undercover address in Lisbon, Portugal used by Jewish resistance fighters, and the location of two camps in Romania for slave laborers and political detainees.



### Holy Scripture Parcel Wrapper

The Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation was established in 2006 to support charitable and educational causes. Many of the historic artifacts now can be viewed online at the foundation's web site, [www.SpungenFoundation.org](http://www.SpungenFoundation.org).

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