

The MacCracken Files

*There are 10 folders in the archives of **Henry Noble MacCracken**, president of Vassar from 1915-1946 pictured at right¹, pertaining to displaced and refugee scholars in Vassar's Special Collections unit. These are notes on what we found in these folders, and as comprehensive of a narrative as we could form from their contents. We have also compiled profiles of the refugee scholars listed below who visited campus. If any of this intrigues you in particular, we encourage you to look further into the folders yourself--there's some pretty fascinating stuff down there!*

-Jenna Doherty '17, Tonya Ingerson '18, Amy Lieber '18, Lindsay Suarez '16, & Emily Webb '16



Refugee Children (Folder 75.13)

- “First Report to Schools, Colleges, and their Associations”-US Committee for the Care of European Children (CCEC)- 7/17/1940
 - “The official agency for the reception and care of European children sent to the United States for the duration of the war”
 - Eleanor Roosevelt was honorary president
 - pamphlet raising questions on how educational organizations can best help children
- series of letters between Mary Fisher (Chairman of the Children’s School, Professor of Child Study @ VC), Leonard Mayo (Director of Child Care Division @ CCEC), & President MacCracken- 7/16-27/1940
 - looks like Dr. Fisher proposed to Mayo to get refugee children sponsored/hosted by VC, but Mayo said no b/c of cost--CCEC preferred welfare agencies handling refugee children in bulk
 - after Fisher told MacCracken, he said: “The fact really is, I think, that only a very few children will come over, and that most of them will not be under the control of the US Committee; and that the services of that committee will be pretty much restricted to helping with visas and other details. The attitude toward finances is certainly not realistic on the part of the committee”
 - looks like administration to help refugees wasn’t being terribly helpful...
- more letters concerning VC hosting refugee children
 - looks like most people were pretty on board
 - BUT! looking more closely, they (both the college and the CCEC) are mostly interested in helping British children--interesting

¹ All photos courtesy of the Vassar Archives.

- someone (Ray Morris) disagreed, stating that private homes would better suit the needs of a refugee child rather than an institution
- Mary Fisher wrote out an entire plan proposing the logistics of hosting 100 refugee children at VC
- Long story short: in summer of 1940, VC really wanted to host refugee children (under 16 years) on campus (Mary Fisher led the efforts w/ support from MacCracken), but Committee for Care of European Children said no--mainly because of costs & logistics with institutions, but also partially because people wanted refugee children to have a house & family to live with instead
 - so while colleges may really want to help in any way they can, maybe there are some things that we should leave up to other organizations?

Committee on Refugee Scholars (Folder 12.42)

- letters & CV's from scholars seeking any position at a school in US
 - two Germans
 - pretty desperate—P.S. from Ernst Gutmann's letter just says "Please help quickly!"
 - one Italian professor lost his position at that university b/c he was Jewish, was teaching in England but needed another job once that ended
- Alice Salomon (German Jew living in NY) visited Vassar to speak, but only came for a very brief time (10 days)
 - recommended by MacCracken: "As we are a woman's college it seems to be very fitting that we should extend our hospitality to women of other countries and I think Alice Salomon is by far the most distinguished woman among the refugees" (1/25/1939)
- one scholar not invited to VC because Haight (professor & aid to MacCracken in these refugee scholar endeavors) believed he couldn't teach anything in addition to what was already being offered by current staff
- letter from Masaryk Institute in NY concerning four Czech professors--2 of whom were fired because of Slovak government ousting all Czechs from working at Comenius University in Bratislava
- another professor (Dr. Martin Schwarzschild) invited for a week to VC to lecture
- Dr. Dora Ilse as well, for a lecture
- pamphlet from Emergency Committee in aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, 12/1/1938--shows that VC hosted **Richard Krautheimer** (Early Christian Art & Architecture professor, *pictured at right*) 1937-38, Moritz Geiger (Phenomenology & Aesthetics professor) 1933-35--but that's it for VC
 - NYU hosted 7, Yale 3, Hebrew University in Jerusalem 12 (!)
- administration asking trustees for some kind of grant to get more refugee scholars to VC (2/15/1939)--request denied



- later it looks like they may have passed a motion to use \$1,000 to bring ten refugee scholars to campus within the year (3/27/1939) ~ \$17,000
- and “A Report of the Faculty Committee on Refugee Scholars” (5/15/1939) seems to confirm their efforts--they got 5 scholars to come and give talks that semester!
- in summary: a lot of scholars lost their positions in Europe at this time b/c of their ethnicity & race (maybe not as much their ideas--at least according to these letters), and institutions in US were trying pretty desperately to figure out how to help them by bringing them to campus; but that costs quite a lot of money, and they were almost always bringing them for only a few days at a time--couldn't have been too enjoyable for those scholars to be traveling so much...

Committee on Refugee Scholars (Folder 45.21)

- all of the scholars who came under this program were sponsored by departments themselves
- scholars were invited to the college for a period of two weeks and were paid \$100 (~\$1,700) to lecture
 - Dr. Adolf Katzenellenbogen
 - Dr. Henryk Arctowski
 - Dr. Kate Frankenthal
 - Mr. Josef Blant
 - Dr. Alfonso Castelao
 - Dr. Renata Calabresi
 - Dr. Jaromil Sladek
 - Mr. Richard Goetz
- invitation to Vassar was more about the gesture of friendliness
- Professor Kroner
 - lectured at Vassar
 - Richard Kroner
 - born March 8, 1884
 - Fought for Germany in WWI
 - studied philosophy, became a professor at the University of Kiel in 1929 and University of Frankfurt
 - MacCracken and other Vassar faculty tried to help him find a philosophy teaching job after his visit to Vassar
- For many of the professors who came to give guest lectures, Vassar administration and faculty went out of their way to try to find them permanent positions at other American colleges or fellowships, etc.
- Marianne Leepe
 - refugee student from Germany
- Louisa Norsa
 - refugee student from Italy
- Susie Klaar
 - refugee student from Austria
- Gertrude Tannhauser
- Marianne Neukirch

- Jzefa Malinowska
- Pay their own way refugee scholars
 - Marta and Stella Jelles
- Total cost of the school to refugee professors and students (not including gifts received for that purpose) in 1939-1940 was \$33,997 (~\$579,455.63)

Committee on Refugee Scholars (Folder 45.22)

- most of this and the folder before are letters pertaining to recommendations to get refugee professors permanent jobs in the United State
- Helping Richard Goetz to find a job
 - “he is Jewish in terms of the present German ideology, notwithstanding the fact that his family has been catholic since generations”
- The Arctowska’s came to the United States for a conference and their home country (Poland) was invaded while they were here, preventing them from returning
 - in a state of limbo
- Kate Frankenthal is extremely cool
 - helping her find a job
- Señor Castelao
- Dr. Jaromil Sladek
- Institute of International Education was coordinating some of these professors

Committee on Refugee Scholars (Folder 47.30)

- letters of recommendation and correspondence to help former guest scholars find jobs
- Report from 1940-1941: Committee’s plan was to invite refugee scholars to campus for 2 weeks each to lecture and give informal talks
 - stayed as guests of the college and were given \$100 each (~\$1,600 in today’s money)
 - “This arrangement is a most satisfactory one, as it not only provides a congenial atmosphere and much needed pecuniary aid but it gives the guest an opportunity to make contributions to the college life which are highly appreciated by students and faculty alike and which make him feel that the favors are not all on one side.” (Committee Report, 6/2/41)
 - funding came from individuals, departmental budgets, the Ellen H. Richards Fund, and \$1000 appropriated by the Trustees (\$16,802.55 in today’s money)
- 14 guests came (some weren’t able to stay for 2 weeks)
 - Mr. Jean-Marie Guislain (French), art and literature
 - Lamberto Borghi (Italian), philosophy
 - Dr. and Mrs. Börnstein (German), both psychology
 - Karl Geiringer (Austrian), music
 - Hilde Geiringer (Austrian), mathematics
 - Karl Ritter (German), drama
 - Otakar Odlozilik (Czech), history
 - “Twilight or Dawn for the Small Nations” article sent to MacCracken
 - Sergius Yakobson (Russian), history and literature
 - Olgierd Langer (Polish), economics

- Mrs. Langer (Polish), writer
- Dr. and Mrs. Elbogen (German), Jewish history and literature
- Lydia B. St. Clair (Czech), drama
- some refugee scholars, including Otakar Odlozilik and Richard Kroner, were given letters of recommendation by MacCracken and other faculty to help them find long-term employment at other universities

Committee on Displaced Scholars (Folder 48.72)

- The report covers the year of 1941 - 1942
- According to this report, they did continue to invite scholars to stay at the school for two weeks and gave them \$100 each (\$1,611.67)
 - Six guests were invited, but only five came
 - Dr. Maximillian Beck (Czech) Philosophy
 - Gave three letters on Jan 20, 22, 23 1942
 - The Responsibility of Philosophy Today
 - A Defense of the Ideals of the Common Man
 - The Power of Reason vs. the Power of Facts
 - Miss Annette Kolb (French) Writer
 - Sent a thank you letter to MacCracken
 - MacCracken responded to her thank you letter
 - Dr. Eggar Zilsel (Austrian) Philosophy, Math, Physics
 - Dr. Euphrosina Markoff (Romanian) Slavic Lit
 - Dr. Jerry Kaulberez (Polish) Physiology
 - He sent a thank you letter to MacCracken
- Apparently, the class of 1945 was super big, so no speakers could come until January 19th
- At this time, America entered WWII, and there were many issues with allow “enemy aliens” into the country w/o special permission
- Paul Stefan’s associate asked for a grant to write his autobiography (It was rejected)

International Committee to Secure Employment for Refugee Professional Workers 1933 (Folder 66.41)

- Over 1000 applicants filled out a questionnaire regarding
 - 1) The Conditions of their home country
 - 2) Can they hold regular employment in their current circumstances
 - 3) If they are given money, or assistance by the committee, can they enlarge their activities (aka, if they have a living salary, will they able to do more things?)
- Apparently Artists and Musicians were struggling financially
- MacCracken was slightly unfamiliar with this org, as he kept asking whether or not it was worth supporting

Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars (Folder 71.17)

- 1934 Memoranda of Work Undertaken for Migrants from Germany
 - Funds Required from USA
 - Immediate

- Scholars
 - International Appeal \$2500 (\$44,200.75)
 - Negotiations Abroad \$5000 (\$88,401.49)
 - Emergency Reserve \$1250 (\$22,100.37)
- Professionals
 - Geneva \$2500 (\$44,200.75)
- Students
 - Scholarships outside of USA \$2000 (\$35,360.60)
- Deferred
 - Scholars
 - In USA \$240,000 (\$4,243,271.64)
 - Fellowships for younger scholars \$90,000 (\$1,591,226.87)
 - British Empire Plan \$300,000 (\$5,304,089.55)
 - Group Research Schemes \$75,000 (\$1,326,022.39)
 - Professionals
 - Case Aid (Genova) \$7,500 (\$132,602.39)
 - Loan Fund (for 750 people) \$300,000 (\$5,304,089.55)
 - Physicians (35 for 2 years) \$120,000 \$2,121,635.82
 - Students \$9,000 \$159,122.69
- Committee Resources for Money
 - Donors
 - Collections organized in different countries
 - Proceeds on sales on behalf of committee
 - Proceeds on entertainment on behalf of committee
 - Contributions from other organizations
- The committee assistant 48 named people
- **Moritz Geiger** (*pictured at right*) found employment at Vassar College



Scholarship for German Refugees (Folder 75.19)

- (Nov. 26, 1938) petition to MacCracken asking to bring a German Jewish student who has not been allowed to continue her studies at home to Vassar
- (Dec. 1938) inviting Dr. Thomas Mann from Princeton to give a talk where a small fee would be charged in support of the refugees; didn't work out, Mann was too busy
- (Jan. 1939) attempts by student organization and President MacCracken to get Mayor LaGuardia to do a talk about Germany in support of the refugees
- Helen Douglas, note to MacCracken about LaGuardia and Dr. Kingdon: "1. Survey of fascist methods since Munich, 2. anti-semitism as a scapegoat technique facilitated by appeasement policy, 3. reasons behind scapegoat technique, 4. what we are trying to do-combatting attitudes of anti-semitism, demonstrating our belief in democracy, giving help to people forced out of educational opportunities through fascist methods, 5. we give scholarships because we are interested in education regardless of race or creed"

- Glee Club Concert (admission ticket to benefit refugee student scholarship)
 - concert on March 4
 - 10-25 cents a ticket (~\$2-5)
- (Feb. 1940) Who is Miss Walker? Why isn't she eligible to study at VC?

Intercollegiate Committee to Aid Student Refugees (Folder 94.7)

- (July 25, 1940) copy of check for \$38.31 (\$652.97) for the ^Committee
- (April 11, 1940) letter from Catherine Deeny about "misunderstanding" that has led MacCracken to sever ties with the org
- Vassar's action according to Intercollegiate Committee report of participating schools:
 - "Has had one student this year. Has raised \$2,900 (\$49,428.52) - enough for two or three additional students next year. Still another scholarship has been given by an alum. Funds were raised primarily thru a Glee Club Concert with Princeton, a photo studio which was the project of two students, food sales, "Golden Rule Dinners", and the "Miscellany News" party, also direct contributions. An educational campaign was conducted. The drive will be continued next year."

Miscellany News

- April 29, 1939: WE ADOPT REFUGEE CHILDREN

"The passage of the Wagner-Rogers resolution now pending before Congress would be splendid evidence of America's concern in the refugee problem. This action, supported by almost every national group. will permit the entry into the United States of 20,000 German refugee children outside the quota. The need of these children for admission into a generous and democratic country can hardly be realized by those who live in security and to whom education is a matter of fact. In Germany. Jewish children may not attend state schools, they may not play in public parks, they cannot even walk about the streets without fear of being taunted and beaten. Under tension of the continuous menace of the concentration camp, their parents cannot bring them up decently. The great anxiety of German Jews to safeguard their children, even if it means sending them to foreign and distant homes, proves how real the need is for their emigration. In bringing a new way of life to these forlorn children drawn from Jewish and other groups. America will once more become the traditional haven for refugees. At the same time these boys and girls will not become a burden to our state. Several thousand hopeful foster parents have already [offered] to adopt refugee children. It is common knowledge that there are never enough American orphans available to meet adoption demands. The enrichment American education and security will bring to the life of these children will outweigh whatever slight amount it may cost us. and beyond this we must not forget the cultural contribution they will make." Objections by the 200 Americans to the emigration plan made in the name of "patriotism" are as groundless as they are un-American. It is claimed, for example, that refugee children will aggravate unemployment in the future, yet the AFL and CIO support the Wagner-Rogers resolution. The admission of 20,000 children will not overrun the country with a flood of foreigners as these "patriots" suppose. On the contrary, we should welcome the opportunity of bringing hope and comfort to the lives of refugee children. In rescuing these children, shunted about by the German state, we demonstrate the responsibility of the humanitarian nation in action."

The International Student Service Under MacCracken

The International Student Service during the years of 1939-1945 was designed to give displaced scholars temporary homes at colleges in America so they could continue their intellectual practices. Under Henry MacCracken's guide, many people involved in the programs sent a series of correspondence with him attempting to make such a large-- scale program successful at Vassar. Some professors that came to Vassar during this time included Dr. Otto. Brendel who was a professor of Roman Archaeology, Dr. Alice Solomon, a social worker, Dr. Alois Naster, a Viennese journalist and also literary critic, and **Ernst Krenek**, an Austrian composer targeted for his "degenerate" music (pictured at right). Other colleges that worked together with Vassar to help over 1,200 displaced scholars included Dartmouth and Wellesley. While the program was of the best intentions, it was not without issues.



Many letters between the president and the tireless workers running the program focused on the lack of funding for the program. Mildred Wertheimer was one of the main advocates of fighting for more money to help these scholars get safely to America. One notable theme of these letters was the importance of mental health. Many of the top people working to make this program a success wanted to ensure the scholars would be able to adapt to a new life in America and their mental health would not suffer. Beyond that, transportation was a huge issue especially when it came to the subject of refugee children. Over 10,000 children needed to be replaced but the program to help these children escape from Europe was plagued again by issues of money, transportation and safety issues, and most importantly finding a loving family to take care of them. A woman named Mary Fisher spearheaded the movement to help get the children across to America to follow their academic dreams. The program also asked that if the children were under 16, they needed an escort to take them to America. Although the program was valiant in its intentions, it never got off the ground because of funding issues.

Overall, most of the scholars displaced were doctors, lawyers, non-□Aryan teachers, chemists, engineers, journalists, and artists. A surprising amount of these scholars were women showing how advanced Vassar College was even 70 years ago. Although the program was plagued by financial and safety issues, with the work of **President MacCracken**, pictured at right with Minnie Cumnock Blodgett, and women such as Mary Fisher who fought endlessly for more rights for these scholars, countless scholars who would have had their academic promise quashed in Nazi Germany were able to share their voice with people in an open and accepting environment right here at



Vassar College.

- Adam Senack, Bethany Semblante, Borgne Raasch, Lily Berman