

IN VICTORIA

The Holocaust has had a lasting impact in the lives and memories of Victorians.

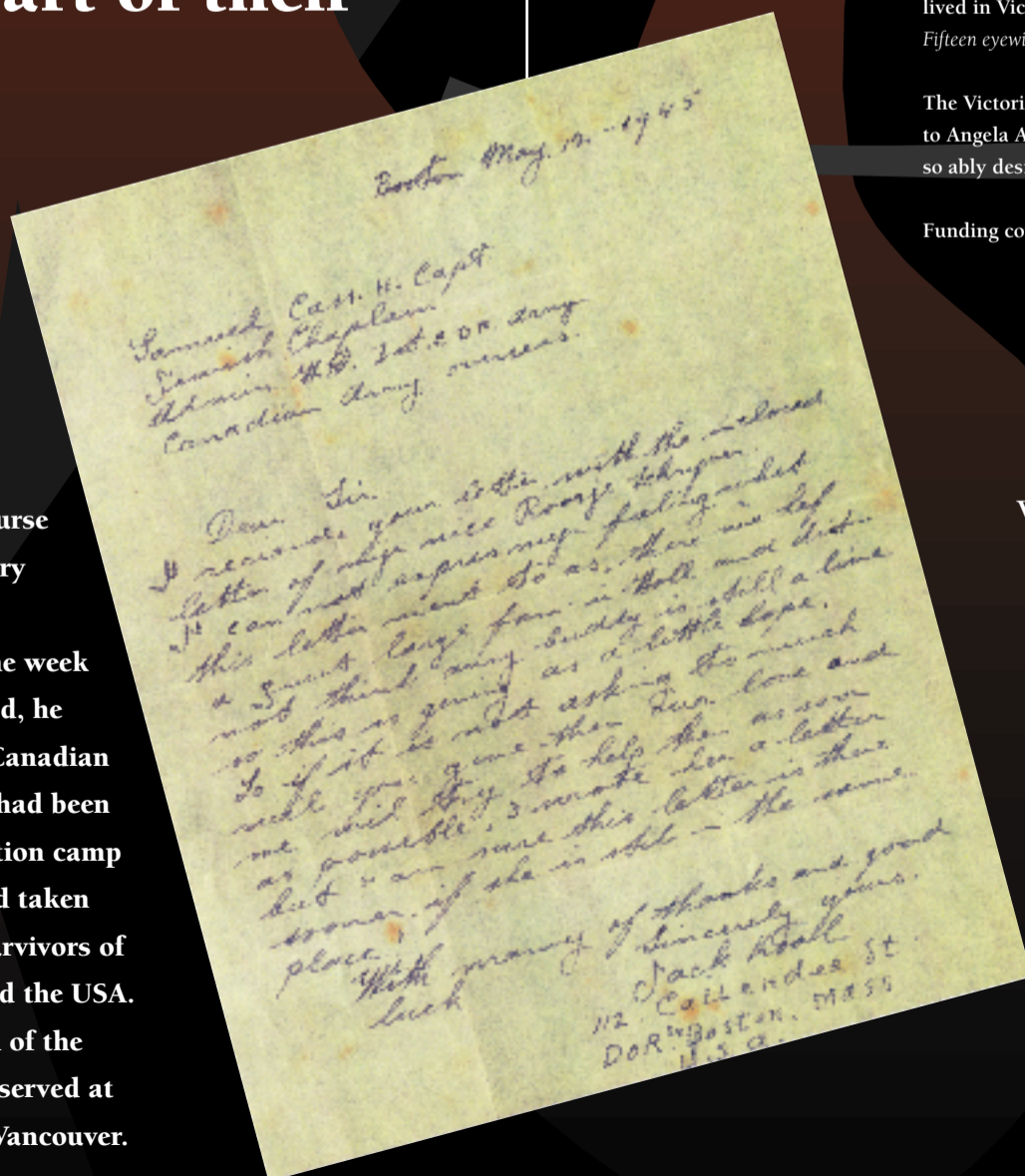
Many people, Jewish and non-Jewish, work diligently in the community to overcome anti-Semitism, to educate students about racism and tolerance issues, and to build bridges of understanding. In 1992, the Victoria Holocaust Remembrance and Education Society was formed under the first president, Holocaust survivor Dr. Peter Gary. Over the years, the Society has encouraged education about not only the Holocaust, but a wide range of issues surrounding racism and inter-faith relations.

Local religious congregations, youth groups, schools and other places of learning, worship and community involvement have come together to implement this mandate of remembrance and education.

For the Holocaust survivors and their families who came to live on Vancouver Island, the horrors of the Shoah will always be part of their lives.

LETTER OF JACK KOOL

Richard Kool's paternal grandfather, Jack Kool, had left Holland in 1929, along with his wife and son. From Boston, they followed the course of events in Europe with worry and dread for the family left behind. On 12 May, 1945, one week after the liberation of Holland, he was able to get a letter to a Canadian Army Chaplain. Rabbi Cass had been in the Westerbork concentration camp in northern Holland, and had taken messages from any Jewish survivors of the camp back to Canada and the USA. Before becoming Chief Rabbi of the Canadian Army, Rabbi Cass served at Congregation Beth Israel in Vancouver.



RICHARD KOOL (United States)

Within Jewish families, the Holocaust was usually not talked about. The children of survivors of the Holocaust, the 'second generation', often have many questions about what their parents experienced. It is a difficult journey, exploring a tragedy that helped to shape these families in so many ways.

Rick Kool, a member of the Victoria Jewish community, decided to research his mother's past, and her lost years hiding in the Netherlands. Until 1994, Hester Waas-Kool never spoke of the war, never talked about how she alone of her family survived. Rick contemplated the impact of the Holocaust upon his own existence in the introduction of his manuscript about his mother's survival: "As I get older, increasingly I am amazed at the uniqueness of each of us and the high improbability of our individual existences. This chanciness of existence seems even more remarkable to someone who clearly was not meant to be. For the children of Holocaust survivors, life itself is remarkably unlikely.

Our parents were not supposed to live. We were not meant to be. When I was young I knew this to be true. I carry my murdered grandfather's name. Now that I am older, I have to think about the meaning of this. And now that my mother has lived to be a great-grandmother and is in her elder years, I have to ponder again the meaning of this chanciness and what it took to bring her survival, and thus my being, about."

All of the personal stories told in this exhibit were taken from people who live or who have lived in Victoria. Some of their stories and photographs are taken from *Keeping the Memory: Fifteen eyewitness accounts of Victoria Holocaust survivors*, edited by Rhoda Kaellis.

The Victoria Holocaust Remembrance and Education Society would like to express its thanks to Angela Andersen, who wrote the original treatment of this exhibit, and Annie Weeks, who so ably designed it.

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