



THE AFJMH NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Susan Shimer

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

Rated as Excellent! In May 2003, The Jewish Museum Hohenems was rated excellent by the ICOM Austria and the Austrian Museumsbund. The Museum continues to offer many events focusing on issues of importance to Vorarlberg, Austria, and the world.

Exhibitions and Events.

MAY 11, 2003

Hohenems Palace was host to The Choir of the Zurich Synagogue for their concert of Synagogue Music by Salomon Sulzer (Hohenems' own), Samuel Naumburg, Emanuel Kirschner and Louis Lewandowsky. Approximately 100 people connected with the Cultusgemeinde Zurich came to Hohenems for this performance. Those attendees also took time to visit the Jewish Museum, the Jewish Quarter and the Jewish cemetery.

MAY 25 TO AUGUST 17, 2003

Jewish and Christian Bible Illustrations from the 16th to early 19th century, were the subject of an exhibit curated by Falk Wiesemann of the Heinrich-Heine University in Düsseldorf. The illustrations came from the Gross Family Collection in Tel Aviv, the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, University Library, Amsterdam, the Bijbels Museum in Amsterdam and other collections. A number of talks and a seminar were offered.

SEPTEMBER 1 - 4, 2003

Professor Dr. Hugh Denman and Markus Valazza provided a workshop on Jewish folk songs.

Readings, Lectures and Discussions. A number of events transpired in connection with the publication of a book entitled *Tirol and Vorarlberg at the Time of National Socialism.*

JANUARY 2003

A lecture and film relating to the difficulties of keeping the Nazi era in memory were presented at the Museum in collaboration with the Frauenmuseum in Hittisau. The 1978 film included photos of Auschwitz and Mauthausen. The lecturer, Dr. Werner Dreier, is a historian who has long studied the time of National Socialism. A discussion of the current situation with respect to right-wing extremism took place on April 10, 2003.

MARCH 5, 2003

Readings from documents and books were held on March 5, 2003. One reading focused on the life of Lilli Jahn (1900-1944), who was murdered in Auschwitz.

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MAY 7, 2003

The Museum offered a lecture and discussion regarding the aftermath of National Socialism in Vorarlberg, including its effect on industrial, cultural and political life during the period after World War II.

MAY 17, 2003

Founding Museum Director, Dr. Eva Grabherr continues to devote herself to the Museum. She, along with Dr. Jan Assmann, Dr. Aleida Assmann and Dr. Christian Meier, led a discussion pertaining to the future of historical knowledge in our digital age. They discussed the concern that deep analysis of the past might no longer be considered important. "What do we do with history and what does history do with us" was the subject of their talk.

Future Events.

SEPTEMBER 21 TO NOVEMBER 16, 2003

The Museum is presenting an exhibit entitled Milk and Herring--Jewish Food Shops in New York. The exhibit will include photographs and interviews. A celebratory opening will be held on September 20th.

A Director is Appointed. Having served the Museum with great distinction, Johannes Inama's tenure as Director will end on December 31. The Museum's Trägerverein and its Scientific Board have spent a great deal of effort in the quest for a new director to lead the Museum. The Museum is pleased to announce that in early September, after carefully considering 67 applications, Dr. Hanno Loewy was appointed to the position. Dr. Loewy will move to Vorarlberg with his family to assume the directorship in January 2004. Born in 1961, in Frankfurt am Main, Dr. Loewy received his PhD in literature, television and cultural anthropology in Frankfurt, and has since worked as a curator and publicist. Dr. Loewy was a founder and the first director of the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt and remained in that position from 1995 through 2000. The Fritz Bauer Institute was the first German interdisciplinary center for the study and documentation of the history and impact of the Holocaust. It boasts more than 1300 members including numerous German and international celebrities. A description of the Institute's work, as excerpted from their website is helpful in understanding the work of Dr. Loewy.

"The Fritz Bauer Institute is trying to offer ideas and to sharpen our awareness of the way our society has developed since Auschwitz and for the ways we have confronted the consequences. Scientific reconstruction and a careful analysis of the means and limits to commemoration and representation are prerequisites to a better understanding of the significance and the effects of Auschwitz on our political culture.

The Institute cooperates with research institutes and educational institutions, with memorial sites and museums in Germany and abroad. It also maintains contacts to a number of survivors' associations. Institute activities range from research projects and interdisciplinary exchange to developing educational pilot projects, participating in memorial event projects and counseling communities, associations and firms in their commemorative work. Exhibitions conceived and/or sponsored by the Institute regularly travel to museums, memorial sites, communal institutions and educational facilities. Publications – literary texts, exhibition catalogues, educational materials, documentary monographs, bibliographies and essays – as well as conferences, lectures and film discussions round out the Institute's varied activities.

The Education Department offers a comprehensive overview of didactic materials for teaching about the Holocaust. In cooperation with other pedagogical institutions, classroom materials and didactic models for formal and informal education are being developed here. Counseling, in-service training and supervision belong to the Department's tasks as well. The Fritz Bauer Institute strives to encourage responsible educational work which takes the various family and collective backgrounds of children, adolescents and citizens in today's multicultural German society into account. A critical

approach to German history and a human rights oriented education are the Department's two distinct goals."

Since 2001, Dr. Loewy has undertaken work in Konstanz, which placed the ideas of the Hungarian Jewish film theoretician Bela Balazs in the context of the esthetic, philosophical and political utopia of the early 20th century. He has also taught at the University of Konstanz and has been a guest curator for portions of the permanent exhibitions at the Jewish Museums in Frankfurt and Berlin. Dr. Loewy has written a number of articles as well as books relating to the Holocaust, modern cultural history, including National Socialism and the history of Palestine. AFJMH welcomes Dr. Loewy. We look forward to a productive and enduring relationship.

THE MUSEUM'S ADMINISTRATION

Since October 2002, a new institutional body has undertaken the responsibility for the operation and staffing of the Museum. It is called the Jewish Museum of Hohenems Institutional Association (the Trägerverein) and it serves as the corporate body to insure independent operation of the Museum. The Trägerverein fulfills mainly strategic tasks, thus allowing Museum management to undertake operational obligations. The Chair of the Board of Management is Dr. Eva Häfele; Dr. Paul Rachbauer is Vice Chair and Dr. Karin Rettenmoser is Secretary.

Also created is a new Wissenschaftliche Beirat, which is loosely translated as a Scientific Advisory Board. Perhaps we might think of it as a museum advisory board. The Scientific Advisory Board consists of members who have expertise in Judaism, Museology, Jewish Museums or local political and cultural subjects. The membership was elected for a period of four years and will meet semi-annually. The purpose of this board is to advise the Museum Director on programs and activities of the Museum, to advise the Museum regarding further growth, to assist the Museum in connecting to an international network, and to undertake tasks at the request of the Museum Director. Members of that Scientific Advisory Board are: Samy Bill of Basel, Dr. Werner Dreier of Bregenz, Dr. Eva Grabherr of Dornbirn, Dr. Raymond Guggenheim of Zurich, Dr. Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek of Vienna, Mag. Bernhard Purin of Munich and Dr. Emile Schrijver of Amsterdam. Brief biographies of each of the Board members appears on the Museum's web site

Another organization very much involved in the support of the museum is the Verein zur Förderung des JMH, the Association for the Promotion of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. Membership is currently open to those interested. More details can be found on the Museum's website. Members of this Board include: Dr. Eva Häfele serving as President, Mag. Gerhard Frontull serving as Vice President, Arno Gächter serving as Treasurer, Anna Schinnerl serving as Secretary, DI Otto Amann, Dr. Werner Dreier, Reg.Rat Agnes Jäger, Johannes Lusser, Herbert Pruner, and Dr. Thomas Weggemann. Kurt Bollag was also a member of the Board until his recent death.

The Synagogue Restoration. Gerhard Lacha, a private investor, has obtained the right to the use of the building for a period of 50 years in exchange for the renovation, which should highlight the building's former life as a synagogue.

Under the plans of the two architects, Ada and Reinhard Rinderer (Ada by the way is Jewish and they have done extensive research on the history of the synagogue), the prayer room will be rebuilt as it was. This means that the ceiling will be raised to its former level. A lower ceiling installed in recent years will be removed. The gallery which was removed will be reinstalled. The synagogue was built in late baroque style between 1771 and 1772. Women sat in the gallery for almost the first hundred years. Then, from 1863 to 1867, the synagogue was remodeled, so that an organ could be placed in the gallery. Thereafter, the women sat downstairs in the main prayer hall, at first separated from the men.

The exterior of the building will be reconstructed to appear as the original synagogue did, but with one significant and important symbolic difference. The windows on each side of the front will appear as before, but the arc which protruded on the outside and which held the Torah on the inside, will be reconstructed as a blank wall.

The Mikvah will also be renovated. Additionally, there are plans to renovate other houses in the Jewish Quarter, as well.

Upon completion of the renovation, the city will rent the building from Mr. Lacha, and they will sublet the space to a music school. The music school, which presently exists at a different location, provides education for about 300 children and adults. It is not designed to educate professional musicians.

New Website Online. As you may remember, we contributed financial support for the website's translation into English and think you will be pleased with the result. Be sure to visit the site at www.jm-hohenems.at. The web page is available in English and German.

A great deal of data from the Museum's database will be available online, and some already is. For example, as in the article that follows regarding the cemetery, you can read inscriptions on gravestones in the Jewish cemetery online. Also up and running online is data regarding the various houses in which members of the Jewish community resided. Included on the site is the location of the house, those that lived there and when, as well as information about that family.

The website now contains the entire dissertation of Dr. Eva Grabherr in English. The American Friends contributed to the translation of that dissertation, and had the pleasure of printing an important chapter of the dissertation last year in our Newsletter. With a simple click on your computer, you can read the rest. It is easily downloadable in pdf format and makes for fascinating reading about Jewish life in 19th century Austria.

Also on the site are numerous links, including one for the American Friends, and other organizations that might be of interest to our members. Soon available through another click of your mouse will be our own publication of *The AFJMH Newsletter*. Also available on the Museum's website are numerous documents in pdf format which should interest our membership. Do take a look.

Finally, there is a forum available for Friends and descendants. We should avail ourselves of that forum to communicate with each other and other interested persons whether for genealogical purposes, for research or just to keep in touch.

THE JEWISH CEMETERY HOHENEMS

By Susan R. Shimer

As we know, Hohenems has a Jewish cemetery in which many of our ancestors are buried. What we have recently learned is that many years ago staff members of the Museum, with the assistance of many local residents, undertook a massive project to record the inscriptions on all of the tombstones in the cemetery, many of which had so deteriorated over time that they were no longer legible. As a result of this effort, the Museum prepared a CD on which it has recorded each grave site and the inscriptions on the gravestones to the extent they were still legible. Those inscriptions, in German and in some cases in Hebrew as well, record the birth date and date of death of the person buried. Some gravestones have been repaired in the past few years, but many have deteriorated even further and without the information contained on the CD the identity of those buried there would have been lost. The Museum's new web site permits us to obtain this information with the click of the mouse.

On the Museum's web site, one can find the inscriptions on the grave stones of Baumann, Biedermann, Bernheimer, Bickart, Brentano, Brettauer, Brunner, Burgauer, Egg, Eisenstaedel, Elkan, Erlach, Federman,

Fränkel, Guggenheim, Heiman, Hirschfeld, Kitzinger, Landauer, Löwenberg, Löwengard, Maier, Mendelsohn, Menz, Reichenbach, Rosenthal, Schlesinger, Schwarz, Schweizer, Simon, Steinach, Steinbach, Sulzer, Ullmann, Weil, Weiler, and Wohlgenannt.

For those interested in learning about your deceased relatives from their gravestones, you may either go to the Museum's new website, or contact the Museum staff, identifying the particular family line in which you are interested and they will send you a print out of the data on the CD. A nominal contribution to cover the cost of searching, printing and mailing the data would be appreciated.

THE BRUNNER FAMILY REUNION

ROME, ITALY

JUNE 26 -28, 2003

By Felix Jaffe

The Brunners seem to enjoy rather frequent family gatherings. The first meeting took place in 1986, when Hilda Brunner invited her relatives for her 89th birthday, for many the last unforgettable evening at the Brunner villa in via Scorcola. Teddy Reitlinger, who unfortunately passed away not long ago, invited everybody to his lovely home in Kienberg, Austria in 1996, also with great success. Over 60 members were present at the interesting gathering of all the original families in Hohenems in 1998. Then, in the year 2000, over 100 relatives met in Trieste, a town in which many lived or had lived and to which they are sentimentally attached.

The most recent Brunner reunion took place in the center of Rome, Italy from June 26 to June 28, 2003. It was convened and perfectly organized by Gianni Montezemolo and his sister Eleonora Boni, seconded by her children. Over 100 family members, spouses, boy and girl friends, and children were in attendance from nine countries; those being Austria, Australia, Belgium, Israel, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and USA.

It is encouraging to point out that young members were well represented (10 of them went to the discotheque twice). At least 12 children were also present. In addition, new babies are being produced continuously at a satisfactory rate.

Two interesting and most successful visits were organized with excellent guides: one to the Villa Adriana in Tivoli, and one to the Vatican Museums and the Cappella Sistina.

The business session was limited to the presentation of memorabilia of the descendants of Heinrich Brunner (Wolf). Mark Brunner had some ancestor's portraits displayed on the blackboard, and other members added a few more. All this material will be put on CDs by Paolo and Cristina Boni (Personeni) and will be mailed to the participants. Some members talked briefly about the older relatives they had known well. Probably due to lack of time, the new family tree compiled by Dorothy Winter was not presented; however, it was laid out on a table and available for inspection.

The time and location for the next meeting were established by asking each participant to complete a form. The majority of participants selected Malaga in the year 2007. Filippo Faraguna, a bank executive in this city, agreed to organize this meeting—we are certainly in good hands!

More on IN VIENNA, THEY PUT YOU IN JAIL

The Max Birnbach Story

A film by Cheryl Blaylock; original musical score by Paul Jacobs; editing and cinematography by Roger Acosta; narrated by Gerry Birnbach

You may recall that Max Birnbach escaped to Switzerland by crossing at Hohenems and that the Museum assisted Ms. Blaylock by supplying her with information about the smugglers who managed to arrange the

transport of refugees to Switzerland. The world premiere of this film was held on April 27 at the Swiss American Film Festival in New York City

A Rosenthal Family in Graz.

Another branch of the Rosenthal family has come to the attention of the Museum and the American Friends. Dr. Peter Presinger of Graz, whose family remained in Austria through the war, has visited the Museum and written to the American Friends. His paternal grandmother was Paula, born Rosenthal, daughter of Josef Julius Rosenthal and his wife Alice-Florence, born Frankau, in London on August 17, 1852. Josef Julius was born in Hohenems on January 19, 1849, the son of August Rosenthal and his wife Fanny Lowenberg. August Rosenthal was the second son of Josef (Veit Levi) Rosenthal, the brother of Urban (Veit Levi) Rosenthal, the patriarch of the Rosenthal family about which we have known heretofore.

Alice Florence and Josef Julius converted to Protestantism, and their branch of the Rosenthal family is not traced further in Dr. Taenzer's book. The family was influential in Graz. Josef Julius controlled the Grazer Tramway Company. He died in Graz on December 15, 1915. His wife died on November 5, 1938.

Paula Rosenthal Presinger had two siblings: August shot himself on April 2, 1933 during the first anti-Semitic action in Munich. A sister Margit, born June 13, 1889, was a doctor's helper, and lost her life in a concentration camp on November 19, 1944. Paula Rosenthal Presinger herself was imprisoned at Theresienstadt but somehow survived. She died in 1965.

Dr. Peter Presinger was born on April 22, 1937 to Dr. Herbert Presinger and his wife Katharina, born Karnitschnigg. Katharina Karnitschnigg let herself be divorced from Dr. Herbert Presinger in 1938. He lived through the war relatively undisturbed, as did his siblings. Dr. Herbert Presinger died August 19, 1989,

In addition to Dr. Herbert Presinger, Paula Rosenthal Presinger had two other sons, Dr. Helmut Presinger and Walter Presinger, and one daughter, Grete Presinger. Dr. Helmut Presinger's situation during World War II was difficult. He served in France, but had a "soldbuch" without the notation "not Aryan." However, absent clarification about his family's Aryan status, he could not become an officer and complete his medical studies. This led to some excitement among the military, but no difficult consequences. Walter Presinger was born in 1910 and died in 2000. During the war, he worked at Opel as a simple worker; he became a manager there after the war. He had three sons, Wolfgang, Michael and Detlev. Grete Presinger lived from 1907 to 1992; she had been engaged to a young man who left her when he learned that she was half Jewish.

In Graz at the Protestant cemetery is the tomb of the family J.J. Rosenthal-Frankau. Inscribed thereon is the following information:

Marie Rosenthal	1.1.1880 - 7.6.1887
Amalie Rosenthal geb. Ostheimer	20.8.1824 - 27.3.1906
Dr. med. und techn. August Frankau	2.6.1878 - 2.4.1933
Josef Julius Rosenthal	19.1.1849 - 15.12.1915
Alice Florence Rosenthal geb. Frankau	17.8.1852 - 5.11.1938
Schwester Margit Frankau	13.6.1889 - 19.11.1944
Grete Presinger	1907 – 1992

Another grave in the same cemetery shows the following:

Dr. Alfred Presinger	1875 - 1942
Paula Presinger	1884 – 1965

KURT BOLLAG, 1921 – 2003

While in Hohenems in July, the museum administrators and our Stephan Rollin were invited for coffee and cake by Kurt and Liliane at their house in Widnau. He was in top condition. Therefore, it was shocking to learn that less than two weeks later on July 24, Mr. Bollag suddenly died. An honorary member of the Vereins zur Förderung of the JMH, he was born on October 29, 1921 to Jakob Bollag and Jenny Landauer. In 1936, he left Hohenems with his family and emigrated to Switzerland, moving just across the border to Widnau. Kurt Bollag and his sister were the last living members of the Jewish community of Hohenems.

Throughout his life, Kurt Bollag maintained his ties to Hohenems. With numerous objects and documents from his family archive, he supported and enriched the work of the Jewish Museum Hohenems..

The support and improvement of the Jewish Cemetery in Hohenems was a vital project for him. The cemetery had been neglected and severely damaged during the time of National Socialism. He helped form the Vereins zur Erhaltungdes Jüdischen Friedhofs. Through the purchase of the land and his constant insistence on the maintenance and improvement of the property, Kurt Bollag's efforts brought Hohenems one of the best maintained Jewish cemeteries in all of Austria. We will miss his energy, his charm and his wonderful companionship.

Kurt Bollag is survived by his wife Liliane and their son Yves. His last wish was to be buried in the Hohenems Jewish cemetery. That wish was met on July 27 at 2:00 PM. The funeral was conducted by Dr. Hermann Schmelzer, the Rabbi of St Gallen.

PROFESSOR ERIK WELTSCH, 1914 - 2003

Professor Erik Weltsch, born to a liberal Jewish family of Vienna in 1914, died on September 7, 2003, after a short illness. He left Austria to work in Egypt in 1935 and returned to settle in Vorarlberg in 1958. Soon he began to engage himself in Vorarlberg's cultural life. Professor Weltsch was a founding and honorary member of the Vereins of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. His contributions to the Museum were many, including work on the theme of Displaced Persons and the history of the ownership of houses in the Jewish quarter of Hohenems. He was also an honorary member of the Vorarlberger Library. Erik Weltsch was awarded the title Professor for his many important contributions. Professor Weltsch was buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Hohenems on September 11.