



Our Family

by

Heinz and Thea Ruth Skyte, née Ephraim

History of Jews in Fuerth



The town hall in Fuerth

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

In the 14th century Fuerth consisted of just nine farms and a few other buildings. By 1600 the town had a population of over 2,000 inhabitants.

Jews were supposed to have already lived in Fuerth in the 15th century, but were expelled. Land in Fuerth was owned by the Margrave of Ansbach, the Bishopric of Bamberg and the Burgrave of Nuremberg. In 1528 the first two Jews, Perman and Uriel Wolff, received permission from George the Pious, Margrave of Ansbach, to settle in Fuerth. The Prince Bishop of Bamberg in 1553 allowed a further three Jewish families to settle on land owned by Bamberg cathedral. Due to the expulsion of Jews from nearby Nuremberg more Jews came to Fuerth and were allowed to settle there on land belonging to Brandenburg-Ansbach and Bamberg, but not that of the Burgraves of Nuremberg. By 1601 their number had increased to 22 families. Conditions for Jews in Fuerth were relatively good, due to the rivalry of Ansbach and Bamberg in granting them privileges. In 1719, however, Ansbach Jews, who had paid their ruler 10 fl. protection money per family, also came under the protection of Bamberg. Provost von Guttenberg of Bamberg in that year issued a "Reglement", very precise regu-

lations for Fuerth Jews. It confirmed the "Schutz" of all Fuerth Jewish families and their properties for a period of ten years, for which the Jewish community then had to pay annual "Schutzgeld" (protection money) of 2,500 fl. This was increased to 4,500 fl. in 1754. As a sign of their protection and domicile, Jews had to wear a yellow patch on the front of their clothing.

The Synagogues

In 1616 a synagogue, the "Altschule" later to become the "Hauptsynagoge", was built. During the 30 years war, Fuerth was burned down in 1634 by the Croats. The synagogue, however, being used by them as stables for their horses, was therefore not set alight and thus saved. After that it was unable to be used as a house of worship for a considerable time. When Vienna ordered the expulsion of Jews in 1670, many of them settled in Fuerth. They brought their beautiful candelabra and their "Memorbuch", a book containing dates of deaths and other important events, which had been started in 1633 in Vienna. This then became the "Memorbuch" of Fuerth. In 1680 the synagogue was struck by lightning and in the same year a fire which raged in Fuerth damaged part of the outside, but the main structure was saved. A second synagogue the "Neuschule" ("Kaalschule") was built in 1696.

Whilst most houses were built in wood fires had always been a great danger. The town employed a night watchman, who toured the town with his call:

"Ihr lieben Christen seid munter und wacht,
der Tag vertreibt die finstre Nacht
Lobet Gott, den Herrn."

Dear Christians, stir yourselves and wake up,
the day drives away the dark night.
Praise be to God, the Lord.

In 1693 the Jewish Community complained about this call as the Jews of Fuerth paid exactly the same amounts as Christians towards the night watchman, they demanded these words to be discontinued. Provost Philipp von Guttenberg of Bamberg ordered this to be done on 10th July 1693 and the word "Gentlemen" was substituted for "Christians".

The "Hauptsynagoge" was enlarged and renovated in 1831 and extended still further in 1864. It stood in the "Schulhof", an area situated between Koenigstrasse and Mohrenstrasse, where also stood three other synagogues, the "Alt-Neu Schul", the "Klaus" and the "Mannheimer", as well as administrative buildings and the houses of the Rabbi and that of the Beadle.



The Schulhof in the 1930s. The building housed the offices of the Fuerth Jewish Congregation.

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

On the night of 10 November 1938, "Kristallnacht", all synagogues and buildings on the "Schulhof" were burned down and demolished. Around 1 a.m. orders were given and around 150 SA men in uniform forced their way into the synagogue, demolished the interior and set it on fire. Only at 3.30 am was the fire service summoned, which had previously been notified by the Burgomaster of the intended action and been given strict instructions only to prevent the fires spreading to adjoining properties. Attempts by the fire service to put out the fire were stopped by the SA, who threatened to cut the hoses. The Burgomaster was still not satisfied and on the next morning ordered the fire chief to burn down the little house of the caretaker, where there was also a small prayer room on the first floor. The firemen succeeded in saving the furniture, but were again prevented by the Burgomaster from trying to put out the fire.

A detailed account of the happenings of that night appeared in the Riess Chronik of Fuerth of November 1938:

"10. November 1938. Yesterday afternoon at 5.25, Rath, who was injured by two shots fired by a Jew, died of his injuries. The outrage has also taken effect here. Last night many Jewish shops were demolished. The synagogue in the Jewish "Schulhof" in Koenigstrasse, as well as the "Kaalschule", the "Schar", the old prayer room in Mohrenstrasse were set on fire. All buildings were completely burned out. The fire services were occupied with damping down operations until lunchtime. All Jewish shops are closed today. Military posts have barricaded the site. "Revenge for Paris" has been chalked on the demolished shops of Forchheimer & Schloss on Obstmarkt (1), the Jeweller's Wallerstein in Hirschenstrasse and Goldmann's in Blumenstrasse etc. Several important Jews were arrested. In the afternoon the radio announced: the whole population was strongly ordered by the government to refrain from any further demonstrations and retaliation of any sort whatsoever against Jews. Final measures for the attempted assassination in Paris would be taken against the Jews by the government passing suitable laws. Many spectators stood all day in Koenig- and Mohrenstrasse before the entrance gates to the "Schulhof". During the night and in the morning SA (brown shirts) personnel undertook house searches of Jewish premises. Wherever any resistance was offered or the door not answered, force was used. Many Jews were arrested and kept in the "Volksbildungsheim"*) for the day. In the evening they were driven away in three large buses. Where to? Last night the fire engines only dealt with the prevention of fire spreading to adjacent Christian houses. In the Jewish Orphanage at the corner of Julien - and Rosenstrasse all groundfloor windows were smashed. On the frontage of the house chalked in large letters is: "We do not allow a German to be murdered by a Jew!" The words "Jews shall perish!" are written on the walls of the Jewish Secondary School in Blumenstrasse. The interior of the Jewish Café in Moststrasse has been smashed to smithereens, as some of the guests offered resistance. At 1.30 a.m. nearly all local Jews were taken from their beds last night by SA-personnel and lined up on the Schlageterplatz, as were the 42 Jewish children from the orphanage in Julienstrasse. At 6 a.m. they were taken to the hall of the "Volkbildungsheim". Women, girls and children were allowed to go home at 9 a.m., their husbands were also released. But about 132 of them were driven off in buses in the evening."

The "Volksbildungsheim", a cultural and educational foundation known as "Berolzheimianum" was built in 1904/05. It had been given to the town by Heinrich Berolzheimer, a Fuerth Jewish pencil manufacturer and his sons, living in the U.S.A. Further large endowments by members of the Jewish Community were made to ensure its upkeep in the future. The official opening took place in 1906 during the visit of Prince Ludwig for the centenary celebrations of Fuerth's belonging to the Kingdom of Bavaria, when the Prince, in 1913 becoming King Ludwig III, stayed as the guest of Anton Sahlmann at the "Sahlmann-Villa" in Fuerth. The Berolzheimianum had a free public library and reading room and a large hall and gallery, to be used for concerts, art and trade exhibitions etc. Its Deed of Foundation laid down that it should serve all citizens irrespective of status, religion or political persuasion. On their accession to power the Nazis, however, very soon excluded

Jews from using the building. On "Kristallnacht" Jews, after their arrest, were subjected here to abuse and ill treatment by Nazi officials. Heinrich Berolzheimer was a Freeman of Fuerth. A plaque to his memory has been affixed in recent years to the house where Berolzheimer had been born in 1856, 19 Ludwig-Erhardstrasse (formerly Sternstrasse), the original house of the family firm Forchheimer & Schloss.

Nothing remains of the former centre of Jewish cultural and religious life. Since 1986 a memorial sculpture of red granite by the Japanese artist Kunihito Kato stands on the site of the former synagogues, the only reminder of the once numerous and prosperous Jewish community who worshipped here.

Around the base of the monument is the following inscription:

"Ewiger. Voelker drangen in Deinen Besitz ein. Verunreinigten dein Heiligtum. Sie vergossen das Blut wie Wasser. Wir wurden zum Gespoett unserer Nachbarn. Psalm 79. Zum Gedenken an das Wirken unserer juedischen Buerger. Ihre Opfer und Leiden durch den Nationalsozialismus. Zur Erinnerung an die Synagogen die hier am 9 November 1938 zerstoert wurden."

O Lord, the heathen have come into thy inheritance; they have defiled thy holy temple; they have poured out blood like water. We have become a taunt to our neighbours. Psalm 79 In memory of the work of our Jewish Citizens. Their sacrifices and sufferings through National Socialism. In remembrance of the Synagogues destroyed here on 9 November 1938.

The Jewish Cemeteries

Land, at that time situated outside the town, had been bought for a Jewish cemetery in 1607, which was surrounded by a wall in 1653. This ground was used for interments until the beginning of the 20th century. A new Jewish cemetery in Erlangerstrasse was opened in 1906.

The Old Cemetery was desecrated during the Nazi period, graves were wrecked, their stones broken or in the process of being removed from the cemetery to be used for "other purposes". Any human remains found were re-interred after the war, the memorial stone reads:

"Zur Erinnerung an die namenlosen Toten, deren Gebeine von frevelhaften Haenden geschaendet, erneut hier ihre Ruhe fanden."



The Memorial to the former Jewish citizens of Fuerth on the former "Schulhof" in 1988.

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

To the memory of the nameless dead, whose bones were desecrated by criminal hands, and who here found renewed rest.

The many gravestones found ready for transportation have been re-erected in lines in part of the cemetery, but no longer belong to any graves.

Since 1991 Frau Gisela Blume has undertaken the documentation of the Old Cemetery, cataloguing and photographing all graves. To this extent she has tidied it up, removed weeds and ivy, cleaned the grave stones etc at first practically single handed with only the occasional help of the town's gardening department. In the beginning it had been thought that there might be some 1,000 graves, but up to the middle of the 1990s Frau Blume has discovered some 6,200. An Israeli researcher had been helping her to translate Hebrew inscriptions on stones. After the researcher left Frau Blume took a course in Hebrew to enable her to carry on this work. All this she does on a voluntary basis and does not accept any remuneration for her work.

The Jewish Orphanage

An Orphanage for boys, the first in Germany, was founded 1763, to which one for girls was added in 1884 in an adjacent building. The former Jewish Orphanage building is one of the very few Jewish buildings still standing. In 1982 Julienstrasse, in which it is located, was renamed Hallemannstrasse, after the last director of the orphanage who, in 1942 together with his family and 33 orphans, was sent to his death. A plaque in the building has the following inscription:

"Am 22 Maerz 1942 wurden die letzten Insassen dieses Hauses 33 Waisenkinder mit ihrem Lehrer und Direktor Dr Isaak Hallemann in den Tod nach Izbica geschickt."

On 22nd March 1942 the last occupants of this house, 33 orphans with their teacher and director Dr. Isaak Hallemann, were sent to their death to Izbica.

After that until 1945 the building was used to accommodate "Zwangsarbeiter", a forced labour camp. The small synagogue of the orphans was the only one in Fuerth to have survived. It was restored after the war and now houses the synagogue of the present small congregation of Fuerth. This congregation consists mostly of survivors of former concentration and displaced persons camps and their descendants. Only a handful of Fuerth Jews returned to their former place of residence after the war, amongst them Leo Rosenthal, who became a town councillor of Fuerth. In recent years many Russian Jews have found a new home in Fuerth.

A Jeshiva had been established and by 1690 there were also Jewish printing works.

During the 19th century the Jewish population of Fuerth gradually increased and very considerably so after 1861, when all restrictions on the movements of Bavarian Jews were finally lifted. Jews could then settle anywhere and a great number moved from the villages, where they had been living for generations, to larger towns. Jews contributed greatly towards social and cultural institutions in the town.

During the 1930s Jews, as everywhere in Germany, became subject to ever increasing Nazi persecution. Many, who were able to do so, emigrated.

All land belonging to the Jewish community, the hospital and the two cemeteries were forced to be sold in November 1939 for a total of 100 Marks. Jews were still allowed to use the cemeteries, but had to pay rent for them.

Statistics (2)

Year	Inhabitants	Jews
1601	over 2,000	22 Families
1726	approx.6,000	1,500
1812	12,286	2,446
1825	13,264	2,510
1840	14,989	2,950
1852	16,727	2,649
1861	19,126	
1871	24,741	3,250
1875	27,428	3,317
1880	31,063	3,336
1910	66,553	2,826
1925	73,693	2,504
1933	77,135	2,000
1938 (Febr.)		approx. 1,400
1939		785
1941 (Oct.)		600
1943		38

By May 1939 only 785 Jews still lived in Fuerth. More emigrated, moved or were moved after this date.

Deportations from Fuerth started in 1941.

Date	Deportees	Destination
29 November 1941	83	Riga-Jungfernhof
24 March 1942	224	Izbica
23 April 1942	4	Krasniczyn
10 September 1942	153	Theresienstadt
18 June 1943	38	Auschwitz

17 January 1944	2	Theresienstadt
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One of the Minute Books of the former Jewish Community of Fuerth has survived. It shows that on 4 January 1935 there were still 1632 Jews in Fuerth, of whom 494 were tax payers. It gives the following figures:

Income Tax payers up to M 100	144
Income Tax payers M 100 - 500	169
Income Tax payers M 500 - 1,000	59
Income Tax payers M 1,000 plus	59

Children

Number of children in 1935

age	boys	in Jewish schools	girls	in Jewish schools
under 6 years	50		35	
aged 6 - 14	154	133	130	99
over 14	51	35	29	16

The last recorded meeting of the Committee of the Fuerth Jewish Community was held on 25th October 1938.

Footnotes

- (1) The family firm founded by great-grandfather Max Schloss in 1848 and then owned by our father Sali Scheidt.
- (2) Various sources. Figures up to 1880 from 1886 Fuerth Address Book.