



Our Family

by

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The Firm Forchheimer & Schloss in Fuerth



**Obstmarkt and Forchheimer & Schloss at
Obstmarkt 1 in the 1930s**

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

The origin of the firm Forchheimer and Schloss goes back to around 1812 and Suessmann Forchheimer. The "Matrikel" of Jews in Fuerth show that Suessmann Forchheimer was born in 1784. The date of his immatriculation was 2 November 1812. The address book of Fuerth for the year 1819, the first book after the date of his immatriculation, gives a list of Jewish businesses divided into specific categories. Amongst "Auschnittwaren" - Haberdashery Shops - Suessmann Forchheimer (Froehlich) is recorded at house No 461. This shows that for some reason Suessmann had changed his name from Forchheimer to Froehlich. House No 461 had stood in Sternbeckengasse, later to be renamed Stern-gasse and then Sternstrasse (now part of the present Mohrenstrasse), opposite the present Post Office. It was demolished in the 1960s/70s during the modernisation of that old part of the town.

In 1848 Suessmann Froehlich's daughter Hannchen married Max Schloss, who in 1837 had come from Sugenheim to Fuerth to learn a trade. After all the necessary requirements to receive the grant of domicile, Max had passed his "Master" examination on 9 June 1847, which opened the way to self employment, and in May 1848 received his trade licence.

It appears that on his marriage he either joined or took over the business of his father-in-law and established the firm Forchheimer & Schloss in house No 457, which subsequently became Stern-gasse 175, then Sternstrasse 19 and is now Ludwig-Erhardstrasse 19, just a few meters from house No 461.

This house, where the firm Forchheimer & Schloss started in 1848 was built in 1825. It still stands and is under "Denkmalschutz", e.g. an architectural monument under a preservation order. In the book "Denkmaeler in Bayern" (Monuments in Bavaria) issued by the Bayerisches Landesamt fuer

Denkmalpflege, the Bavarian State Department responsible for the conservation it is described as "Dreistöeckisches Klassizistisches Traufhaus mit flachen Eckrisaliten und Mansarddach (Fue Fl.N. 522)".

In recent years a plaque has been affixed to the house, commemorating Heinrich Berolzheimer, a Freeman of Fuerth, "a true humanitarian", founder of the Berolzheimeranium, who was born in the house on 6 September 1856:

In diesem Hause wurde Heinrich Berolzheimer, Ehrenbuerger der Stadt Fuerth, ein wahrer Menschenfreund, Stifter des Berolzheimeraniums am 6. September 1856 geboren. Er starb am 15. April 1906.



Branch of Forchheimer & Schloss in Schwabacherstrasse

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Max Schloss lived in this house above the "shop" and bought it in 1861. All his children were born here. Heinrich Schloss, Max and Hannechen's youngest son, became a partner in Forchheimer & Schloss on 20 August 1883. A further family partner, future son-in-law of Max, Samuel Gutmann, joined the firm on 27 July 1887. On 30 August 1887 Samuel Gutmann married Sophie Schloss, daughter of Max and his second wife Amalia. Towards the end of the 1880s Max retired from the firm. The firm had expanded since 1848, now dealing also in textiles, linen, draperies, curtains and floor coverings, both wholesale and retail. Further expansion followed and a branch opened in 1895 in Schwabacherstrasse 28 at the corner with Blumenstrasse, later described as one of the busiest streets in Fuerth.

When the original premises in Sterngasse became too small for the ever expanding business the new premises were built next door on Obstmarkt.

The House Obstmarkt 1



Opening of the new premises on Obstmarkt, 1902

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Originally an old inn "Zum weissen Schwane" (White Swan) had stood on the site of the present house, its history going back to 1675. In the 19th century the house had several Jewish owners such as Dettelbacher, Berolzheimer, Reiss and Dinkelsbuehler, names well known in Fuerth at the time. In 1900 the property was bought by grandfather Samuel Gutmann and his cousin Heinrich Schloss, partners of Forchheimer & Schloss. The old house was demolished to make room for the building of the present house Obstmarkt 1. (1)

The "new" house built in 1901/02 was designed by Adam Egerer and comprised business premises on the ground and first floors and living accommodation on the floors above.

The official opening of the new premises is recorded in the Chronicle of Fuerth as having taken place at 5 p.m. on 17 September 1902, just two months after the death of Max Schloss. Samuel and Sophie Gutmann moved from their home above the shop in Sternstrasse 19 into the second floor apartment of the new house next door.

Obstmarkt was one of the old market places of Fuerth, formerly called "Holzmarkt", where in years gone by people from the surrounding countryside sold firewood. It was renamed "Obstmarkt" when fruit sellers started putting up their stalls here around 1874.

In 1905 a wooden hut was erected on the market, paid for with 9,000 Mark of public funds, in which the "Deutsche Dampffischerei-Gesellschaft" sold sea fish. The smell from this soon proved too much for the greengrocers, who objected to it as, no doubt, also did the owners of the surrounding houses. On 8th November 1911 the monumental mason Kreppner, bought the hut for 405 Mark and had it demolished on the 28th of that month.



Obstmarkt 1 between 1905 and 1911. On the extreme right is the hut of the fish company.

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Soon other family partners joined the firm, Siegfried Arnstein, son-in-law of Heinrich Schloss, and in 1912 Sali Scheidt, son-in-law of Samuel and Sophie Gutmann.

Forchheimer & Schloss celebrated the 80th anniversary of its foundation on 30th May 1928. The local papers, the Fraenkische Tagespost as well as the Nordbayerische Zeitung reported the occasion. The report in the latter reads:

Firm's 80th anniversary! During the restless days of the year 1848 the firm Forchheimer and Schloss was founded here and thus today celebrates the 80th anniversary of its existence. The firm was started on a small scale in Sterngasse, but from the beginning the founders, through sound business dealings, managed to draw in their customers. Younger members, who joined the firm, incorporated a wholesale department into the business, so that the premises soon proved to be too small and the owners at that time felt it necessary to build large modern business premises on Obstmarkt 1. In the meantime the town had continually expanded. It was therefore also necessary to set up a branch in the upper part of the town, which opened in 1894 at the corner of Schwabacherstrasse and Blumenstrasse. The firm, which in the beginning mainly dealt in haberdashery constantly extended their range. Apart from adding clothing and underwear, bed, table and kitchen linen, the firm most of all extended in the field of house furnishings, such as curtains, carpets and linoleum and enlarged and improved this department considerably. Today the firm is amongst the most respected and leading firms in its field. The good reputation, which the firm enjoys within the business world and amongst its customers must in the main be due to the fact that at all times reliable and courteous service was the highest principle in its transactions. It was this principle that was kept up even during the years of the inflation, which made such extremely high demands on all businesses, but particularly on the retail trade. The firm, surrounded by a considerable staff of employees, most of whom have already worked there for some decades, can today celebrate the rare occasion of the 80th anniversary of its foundation. We wish the firm further success.

The firm even appears to have had some export business, as a 1922 post card by Lehmann Bros. of Jerusalem shows.



The staff of Forchheimer & Schloss participating in the 1933 May Day procession. In 1934 the firm employed a staff of 32, consisting of two labourers, 25 employees and five apprentices.

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Of the four family partners, Heinrich Schloss died in 1928, Siegfried Arnstein retired from the firm on 30 June 1934 and Samuel Gutmann on 31 December 1936, leaving Sali Scheidt as sole owner from 1 January 1937.

Already in 1933 boycotts of Jewish firms had started, getting worse in the following years.

Family letters of August 1938 state that official permission for the sale of the branch in Schwabacherstrasse had been received. On 2 September 1938 an advert appeared in the Riess- Chronik that the branch of the firm Forchheimer & Schloss will become "arisch" - Aryan. The opening was expected to be probably Monday, 5th September 1938.

During "Kristallnacht", the night of pogroms 9/10 November 1938, the shop windows of the business premises on Obstmarkt were smashed and the words: "Revenge for Paris" chalked on in white. The vast destruction and activities against Jews and Jewish premises and property that had taken place during the night was officially called off in the afternoon of the 10th, after most synagogues in Germany had been burned down. The government would take official steps to punish the Jewish population for the assassination attempt in Paris. On 12 November 1938 the government accordingly ordered the "Ausschaltung der Juden aus dem deutschen Wirtschaftsleben" (exclusion of Jews from German economic activities). A law to that effect was passed on 23 November 1938. This laid down that Jews would be forbidden to own retail, wholesale or manufacturing businesses as from 1 January 1939.

A detailed account of the happenings of that night appeared in the Riess Chronik 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 "Scharr", the old prayer room in Mohrenstrasse were set on fire. All buildings were completely burnt 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, 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 through the passing of appropriate 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" (2) 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 Cafe in Moststrasse has been smashed to smithereens, as some of the guests offered resistance. 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 1.30 a.m.. 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."

Sali was amongst those who were arrested to spend several weeks in the Concentration Camp Dachau, but before being sent there was one of the three signatories forced to sign the sale of all properties of the Jewish Community of Fuerth for 100 Marks. A letter from the District Attorney dated 15 February 1939 states "that the unit value of the properties by far exceeded RM. 100,000."

Whilst Sali was in Dachau the appropriate authorities advised the Mayor of Fuerth on 28 November 1938 to appoint a named liquidator to carry out the winding up of Forchheimer & Schloss. A few days later the Mayor accordingly ordered this to be done. Family documents show that members were forced to "agree" to certain conditions, e.g. to reduce the amount of their claims, or the firm would be declared "bankrupt". Reductions were also made to the value of the firm's stock. Detailed documents exist.

During 1940 a forced "sale" was also imposed on the house Obstmarkt 1. Any "sale" money was paid into a "Sonderkonto der Geheimen Staatspolizei Nuernberg-Fuerth" (Special Account of the Secret State Police). Detailed documents of the proceedings exist.

Sali, who was released from Dachau after a few weeks on condition that he would emigrate. Finally Sali and Frida Scheidt, who had lived in the third floor apartment at Obstmarkt 1 since 1934, managed to emigrate to England at the end of August 1939, just five days before the outbreak of war. Samuel and Sophie Gutmann were both deported from Nuremberg to Theresienstadt on 10 September 1942. Hannchen Arnstein, daughter an one of the heiresses of Heinrich Schloss and widow of Siegfried Arnstein, a former partner in Forchheimer & Schloss committed suicide on 25 November 1941, assumable prior to deportation. Paula Bernkopf, second daughter and heiress of Heinrich, and her family had already emigrated to Jerusalem sometime before 1939.

Post War

After the war the 1938 buyer of the Schwabacherstrasse branch contacted Sali and Frida Scheidt and visited them in Leeds, and agreed a fairer settlement of the sale with them.

Following very lengthy legal proceedings in the late 1940s / early 1950s, some form of settlement was eventually reached between members of the family or their heirs and the then owner-occupiers of the Obstmarkt 1 premises.



Entrance door of Obstmarkt 1

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Obstmarkt 1 is now a listed building under a preservation order. In the book "Denkmaeler in Bayern" (Monuments in Bavaria) issued by the Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, the Bavarian State Department responsible for the conservation it is described as

"a tall four story high business and dwelling house built in sandstone in the rich 'Neurenaissance' style with alcoves. The front door to the house is beautifully carved.

The firm Forchheimer & Schloss had the imposing dwelling house and business premises built, in its design the style of the late 'Historismus' combining with modern building methods. The vaulted entrance hall has a tiled floor and has, as well as the staircase, rich wall and ceiling paintings in the rich 'Jugendstil', coloured glazing, wrought iron banisters and chandeliers. In the apartments are stucco ceilings and the corner bay windows have coloured leaded lights plant motives, one of the now very rare examples of decoration in apartments."

The book also has a number of beautiful illustrations of the interior of the building, the tiled floor and ceiling and wall decoration of the entrance hall, the leaded lights of the upstairs rooms, as well as the entrance door to the shop.

In 1988 the inside of the shop premises had hardly changed. The original front door remains, as well as the big curved staircase with its beautiful wrought iron banister, which led to the first floor showrooms. The shelves, however, are now stocked with stationery instead of textiles and drapery etc.

Until it became a parking lot after the end of the war, fruit stands stood again on Obstmarkt for many years. Some time ago a Fuerth paper reported: "Now, although some trees give the place a friendlier look, it had to give way to the transport of our time - the motor car."

In the 1990s Obstmarkt has undergone another change. Once again it had to give way to "transport of our time" by becoming an entrance to the extension of the Nuremberg-Fuerth underground railway system.

Footnotes

- (1) Stadtarchiv Fuerth.
- (2) The "Volksbildungsheim" had formerly been known as "Berolzheimerianum", a large building, incorporating a concert hall, library, meeting rooms etc. presented to the citizens of Fuerth by Heinrich Berolzheimer, a prosperous Fuerth Jew.