



Our Family

by

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Introduction to the Ephraims, Levys and Alterthums of Province Posen and Berlin and the Koenigs of East Prussia and Berlin

Having put together the history of one side of OUR FAMILY as far as we could from various sources discovered in many State, Town and Gemeinde (Community) Archives most of it from originals, photocopies or microfilm of official Register entries or documents, we started to research the other side of the family.

Researching and writing about the history of the Ephraim, Levy and Altertum families has been rather more difficult. Apart from a few family documents left by my father Alfred Ephraim, there was also a family prayer book. Great-GreatGrandfather Meyer Joseph Levy had recorded some births and deaths of the Levy/Ephraim families in this. Some entries are written in German, others in the German language but in Hebrew script. Up to date it has not been possible to get a complete transcription of these.

Then there is the problem that the areas where the families originated have suffered several upheavals during the 20th century. After the first World War 1914-1918 some of the area became part of Poland, followed by the years of persecution of Jews in Germany and Poland. After the second World War 1939-1945 all land east of the river Oder, where the families had originally lived, became Polish territory.

It also meant coping with certain matters and memories, which were easier not having to be faced. However in September 1990 we spent a most interesting week in Berlin, just before the official reunification of the two Germanys and, of course, Berlin. The wall, which had separated East- and West-Berlin between 1961 and 1989, was partially down and we could move about freely, see the old buildings or places, where they had once stood, and visit the Jewish Cemetery in Berlin-Weissensee and graves of the family. We found some documents dealing with the deportation of our aunt Betty Ephraim to Auschwitz, but so far little else. Cousins provided details of their branches of the Levy family and contributed documents in their possession, though some of the links between some branches are at present still missing.

Some historical material was found in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, the Wiener Library in Tel Aviv and in the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. Maybe there are still some other documents somewhere or some might re-appear. It might even be possible, that there are still some old records of the towns in Polish archives.

In 1994 we visited Neustadt (Lwówek), Birnbaum (Miedzichod) and Schwerin (Skierzyna) all now in Poland, but only managed to have a short glance. Unfortunately there was no time to explore the towns and try to find places of family or Jewish interest. In some towns we also experienced anti-German and anti-Semitic attitudes.

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