



American
Friends of the
Jewish
Museum
Hohenems,
Inc.

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Editors: Susan Shimer and Monica Wollner

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

Stephan Rollin
President

Mark Brunner
Vice President

Uri Taenzer, Esq.
Secretary-Treasurer

10th Anniversary Celebration On April 29 and 30, 2001 the Museum and the city of Hohenems celebrated the Museum's 10th anniversary. A report from Professor Felix Jaffe, a member of the Brunner family, a former resident of Geneva and now a resident of Jerusalem follows:

"The ceremony on Saturday night April 29 was well attended. The President of the Museum Board, former Mayor Otto Amann, announced the award of three honorary memberships to Kurt Bollag, Stephan Rollin and me. As most of you know, Kurt Bollag Landauer, who resides across the border in Switzerland, and his son Yves, have assumed responsibility for the restoration of the cemetery. Stephan Rollin is the President of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Inc. As I was the only one present, I had to thank briefly for all three of us, stressing the importance of the descendants, as usual. On Sunday night there was a pleasant and friendly party at the Museum with drinks, an excellent band, charming young girls, etc., which indicates how deeply the local youth is attached to the Museum. Eva Grabherr, who was the Director during the first five years and was quite instrumental in building up the Museum, was also present. She now lives in Vienna where she is completing a rather monumental Ph.D. thesis for the London University. The subject—obviously, the history of the former Hohenems Jewish community!"

Leitbild A Leitbild is best described as a mission statement or position paper defining the purpose of the Museum. The Museum staff has been busy preparing this document since the beginning of this year. Professor Jaffe reports that "this document was carefully prepared by the staff in open and closed discussion sessions with the assistance of various local and foreign high level museum experts and consultants." An English translation of the final document should be ready soon and will be included in the next *Newsletter*.

Museum Activities The Museum is in good shape under the capable leadership of Dr. Johannes Imana. He is full of ideas and the staff are busy preparing several new exhibits. The fire brigade, which was rebuilt and occupied the old synagogue since 1955, has finally moved out of the building. The synagogue, in use until the time of the Nazis, was built between 1770 and 1772, and renovated between 1863 and 1867. Actually, all that is left of the synagogue is the foundation and the outer wall. To determine what to do with the old synagogue is the focus of a number of exhibits and discussions. The current consensus appears to support usage of the building for a cultural municipal hall. Since June 2001, several exhibits proposing various uses for the building have been displayed. One exhibit prepared by Arno Gisinger sets out the history of the building, with old plans and photographs of the synagogue, as well as the inventory list of the contents of the synagogue prepared on 17 November 1938 when the Nazis took it over.

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Susan Shimer

Monica Wollner

1303 Marlkrass Rd., Cherry Hill, N.J. 08034

Phone: 856-428-5232 Fax: 856-428-7803

Email: renrollin@aol.com

123 N. Church St., Moorestown, N.J. 08057

Phone: 856-235-1172 Fax: 856-235-1911

Email: taenzeru@juno.com

During this month of August, the Museum has displayed films that give a glimpse into Jewish life. This is followed by a video installation by the Israel artist Naomi Tereza Salmon. Other exhibits will continue this year and next year.

The exhibition on the Rosenthal Family, previously scheduled to open in October will now be held from June 13, 2002 to September 30, 2002.

The Museum's hours of operation are Tuesday, to Sunday and holidays, 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. Talks and discussions relating to Hohenems and the Jewish community have continued through the year. For example on March 27, the museum held a talk in its café about the role of women in Jewish tradition, with examples from the Jewish community in Hohenems. Another discussion on May 3 told the story of the Landauers, a Jewish family of Hohenems.

Of course, the Museum itself continues to display exhibits, which document the story of the Hohenemser Jews, and their religious, and daily lives. The Museum's extensive library may be viewed during regular museum hours. The computer databank and archives may be accessed upon request. The archives contain original documents, as well as copies of the story of the Jewish community of Hohenems, and the history of Vorarlberg, the canton in which Hohenems is located.

Convenient Payment Option Added! Dr. Imana has informed us that, by popular request, the Museum's Verein now accepts payment of dues with the following credit cards: American Express, Visa, Master Card, and Diners Club. (Issuer, cardholder's name, number and expiration date will do it!).

THE CEMETERY

The cemetery is under the auspices of the Society for the Preservation of the Jewish Cemetery Hohenems, and not the Jewish Museum Hohenems. Nevertheless, the American Friends has found great interest among our membership in supporting the improvement of the cemetery. While some members have chosen to make individual contributions in support of the cemetery, and the Brunner family has paid to have the Brunner graves restored, the American Friends has also made a recent contribution of \$2,000 towards the improvement of the cemetery. The Office of Monument Protection is also restoring some graves. We anticipate that with these efforts, the entire cemetery should be in excellent shape in a few years.

Kurt Bollag who directs the Society for the Preservation of the Jewish Cemetery Hohenems has recently reported on the activities of the Society in the year 2000. His report has been translated through the good offices of Stephan Rollin:

"Schools and outside visitors (about 200 a year) visit the cemetery regularly after first getting the key from the guard at the Otten Company. Local artisans have made some repairs in the prayer hall at no charge.

In spring 2000, Dr. Jaffe told Mag. Mack of the Austrian Agency of Historical Monument Preservation that the Brunner descendants are willing to pay three-quarters of the renovation costs for the graves of their ancestors. This work was done in the shop of the stonemason, Dr. Pfanner in Scheffau/Allgaeu. The gravestones were then reset in fall 2000.

At that time, a second meeting included Dr. Madrisch and the forester. It was determined that five beech trees had to be removed at a cost of approximately 100,000 AS. This expense will be divided equally among the county of Vorarlberg, the town of Hohenems, the Austrian Monument Preservation Agency, and our Society. Identical financing will repair additional graves from 2001 through 2003.

Potential burials have to be approved by the Chevra Kadisha of St. Gallen and Mr. Amman in Hohenems."

101 BRUNNERS ON THE DALMATIAN COAST

by Mark Brunner

Trieste has existed since Roman times. Those Romans knew how to pick beautiful places. There, on an expansive bay at the very end of the Adriatic Sea, at the beginning of the spectacular Dalmatian coast, they created a harbor and built their houses on a hill overlooking the bay. They crowned the hill with a temple that was converted, in Christian times, to a church devoted to "San Guisto" the patron saint of Trieste.

Today, Trieste is still a beautiful city flowing smoothly over hills and valleys hemmed in on the north by the escarpment of the "Carso," after which the rock formation "Karst" is named. It is a port city of around 300,000 population, which has seen better days and worse days, but despite its great physical attraction, has not yet been found by thundering herds of tourists. None of the usual tourist traps exist. T-shirts and caps can only be found in clothing stores! It is, amazingly, an Italian city on a coast that is still fully Italian.

The Brunner family, at their last meeting in Hohenems, had decided to have its next gathering here in Trieste. And an excellent choice it was. The Brunners have had a continuing presence in Trieste since 1832 when Patriarch Heinrich Brunner and his eldest son Jakob decided to establish a new family business. It was then a newly established major port for the great Austro-Hungarian Empire that grew rapidly into a major industrial center. From a textile distribution business, the Brunners' interests grew with the burgeoning city to include banking, insurance, and many other major Trieste enterprises.

The reunion started with a welcome, a quick summary of our history, projected slides of historic family pictures and a fine catered dinner on the roof terrace of the Revoltella Museum. The next day our busy schedule carried us to the Synagogue for speeches by two Rabbis and then to the lovely wooded Jewish Cemetery where our forebears are buried, some in a Brunner compound. The next stop was the Riseria, formerly a rice processing plant, used by the Nazis to imprison, torture and murder Italian partisans, Communists and Jews—a sad, gloomy and depressing place of a memorial to man's inhumanity to man.

Well over a hundred of us had arrived. Our very capable organizers provided two huge tour buses to transport us. How the drivers maneuvered those monsters through the narrow streets and around sharp corners amazed us Americans. At lunch, we were bussed (in air-conditioned luxury, escaping the heat!) to a park-like restaurant way out in the country on the Carso near the Slovenian border. Here, as we marveled at the beauty of the countryside and enjoyed lunch, horses, donkeys, ducks, geese and chickens, studied us curiously from their compounds. They had never seen so many Brunners before!

After lunch, on we went-on to the Miramar Castle prettily perched on a rock outcropping, jutting into the Adriatic. This exquisite castle was built by Maximilian, heir to the throne of Hapsburg, whose stay in Trieste was cut short when he was sent to rule over Mexico and was killed in the revolution that gave Mexico its independence. He never saw his pride and joy completed. The Brunners used its beauty to good purpose and had a group photo taken. Dinner was held on the terrace overlooking the great blue bay at the nearby Riviera Hotel. Here, despite the long day, we table hopped—chatting energetically as we reacquainted with familiar kin and met new relatives and snapped pictures, to the point of exhaustion. What exquisite fun!

The next day we visited the old section of Trieste, the Serbian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Christian churches and crested the San Giusto Hill to admire an ancient Catholic Church with its lovely Roman mosaics. Later in the morning, in the council chamber of the town hall we were welcomed by the Deputy Mayor. The Deputy Mayor recalled some of the history of Trieste, the important part Brunners had played in its economy, and the great tragedy of World War I when Trieste was part of Austria-Hungary but very close to Italy; when a large portion of the population was Italian; when families were rived with conflicting loyalties; when cousins fought on opposite sides of the front lines; when brother fought against brother. At that point one of our cousins raised her hand and reminded the Deputy Mayor that the Brunners were one of those families. Moreover, indeed one of the streets is named Via Guido Brunner, a great hero, who was posthumously awarded the Italian "Medaglia d'Oro." I later found out a part of Guido's story, whose mother was from staunch Italian stock and whose father, Rodolfo Brunner, was a Hohenemser Austrian with unswerving loyalty to the Hapsburgs. Rodolfo wrote a letter to King Franz Josef apologizing for the shame of his son Guido fighting for

Italy and offering to serve in the Austrian Army in his stead. His offer was not accepted because he was too old. I met that grand old man in 1955 when he was 98 years old and still mentally sharp. He couldn't figure out who my father was, but then when I mentioned my grandfather Lucian his face lit up and he exclaimed: "Oh that Lucian! What a naughty boy he was." I never knew my grandfather. He died 16 years before I was born.

In the afternoon, we attended a lecture based on the diary of Fanny Bles Brunner, a Manchester woman who married Philip Brunner and moved to Trieste in 1894. Following the lecture we had some general discussions of various and sundry family matters to which our ubiquitous cousin Felix Jaffe contributed vociferously. Felix and Dorothy Winter gathered information to bring our immense family tree up to date. The meeting ended with a beautifully photographed and paced film of the 1998 Hohenems Gathering produced by Christian Seiler, dedicated to his grandfather Hans Brunner, and narrated by Christian in his smooth mellifluous voice.

That evening, at dinner in the old Cafe Tomaseo, we came together for one last marvelous meeting of chatting, gossiping, exchanging addresses, snapping pictures and (most importantly) to honor and show our appreciation to our hosts, Lisetta Brunner Dalla Palma, Helen Brunner and Giancarlo Stavro Santarosa for their magnificent efforts of organizing this wonderful reunion. Their work, to bring all this together for such a huge crowd of people, was truly a magnificent accomplishment. Theirs will be a hard act to follow.

The whole Trieste experience was a wonderful, touching experience for us and we are grateful to have been a part of it. We met so many interesting people. In retrospect, I have to believe that they were all on their best behavior because they were all-every one of them-very gracious, very friendly, very pleasant and full of fun. It was especially inspiring to see the different generations so enthusiastically involved in the program. The oldest was Regina Stavro, 89, who was surrounded and doted on by a crowd of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, just as she had been two years prior at Hohenems. When her daughter gave her usual pill to take, she grouched: "They want me to live another 20 years!" With raised hand and fire in her eyes, she urged all to keep faith with "the family, the family, the family."

Zarina and I stayed another week and we were unstintingly spoiled by the cousins who live in Trieste.

Where and when will the next reunion be?

FINAL NOTES

We are so pleased that our (still growing) dues-paying membership now numbers 58! What's more, we are thankful for the numerous letters and calls of encouragement we have received from many of you. We encourage you to continue to share with our editors, Susan Shimer (zsshimer@earthlink.net) and Monica Wollner, or Stephan Rollin or Uri Taenzer, your ideas for future newsletter articles.

On that note, we are interested to hear your opinion as to what aspects of the Museum, the cemetery or other projects should receive our financial support. As you know, this year meaningful contributions have been given towards the upkeep of the cemetery and we have committed to pay for the German to English translation of Eva Grabherr's doctoral dissertation. With that in mind, you can expect more on Eva's fascinating new book in the next newsletter. Along with this issue, we are pleased to include an article on the Bernheimer Family authored by Julie and Marc Levin in collaboration with George Arnstein, Carol and Ron Bernell, Dorothy and Herbert Leviton, Anita Springer and Jim Lerner.

On a final note, it is especially rewarding to hear that our past articles have stimulated many of you to seek out familial roots and, just as importantly, AFJMH membership has fostered new and lasting contacts among our members and friends. With that in mind, Felix Jaffe asked us to help in locating descendents of the BRENTANO family that was prominent among the Hohenems families. To date, Nina Levinson has been unsuccessful in her efforts to locate them. Felix believes the Hohenemser Brentanos owned the Brentano Book Stores, now operated by Barnes & Noble. Could this be true?