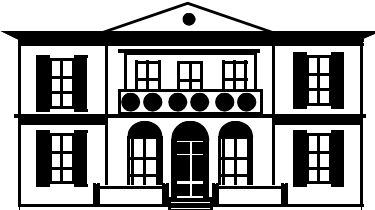


# IN TOUCH

JANUARY 2006



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## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

CLAUDE ROLLIN, ESQ.



Dear Friends,

Another year has come and gone and it is time to reflect on the many wonderful things that took place at the museum during the past year and all of the things we can look forward to in 2006 and beyond.

Last year, the museum once again hosted a number of outstanding exhibitions. One interesting double exhibition honored the significant contributions to Hohenems history made by Aron Tanzer and Bartolomaus Schnell, two very different characters. Our very own AFJMH Secretary-

Treasurer, Uri Taenzer (grandson of Rabbi Aron Tanzer) participated in the opening of this remarkable exhibition featuring his grandfather.

Another highly interesting and unusual exhibition on Jewish "Kitsch" featured all kinds of Jewish ritual objects and educational toys, as well as kitschy keepsakes. The opening of that exhibition included a "keynote lecture" by Mr. Thiemo Dalpra, a local pantomime and artist, who interpreted the collection presented by the museum in his own special and entertaining way.

Finally, in the fall, the museum put on an exhibition which included 580 anti-semitic objects from the collection of Gideon Finkelstein, a Jew who bought anti-semitic items over a 15-year period. This highly provocative exhibit

brought favorable publicity to the museum, including a complimentary press article in *Israel Insider*, a daily news-magazine in Israel.

In March, 2005, the museum opened a new café as a public meeting space. The new café, named after the famous Hohenems Lesegesellschaft (Reading Society) of 1813 is decorated with images of the original Reading Society. Upon the request of the museum staff, the AFJMH was pleased to provide the museum with a small contribution towards that project, which will support the newly established Hohenems Reading Society of 2004.

As you probably know, during 2006, the museum staff will be embarking on a major renovation of the permanent exhibition, which has not

*(Continued on page 2)*

## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

DR. HANNO LOEWY

### JEWISH KITSCH EXHIBITION, A BIG SUCCESS

On October 8, 2005 the Jewish Kitsch exhibition ended with a long night, attended by more than 720 visitors, making the event a landmark in the Museum's history. Michael Wuliger (from Berlin) and Hanno Loewy entertained the guests with a four-hour auction of more than one hundred Kitsch objects from

the exhibition that were playfully explained and successfully sold to the crowd. The little book that appeared with the exhibition, "Shlock-Shop. Die Wunderbare Welt des jüdischen Kitschs" edited by Hanno Loewy and Michael Wuliger, is widely distributed through bookstores and Jewish Museums in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. You can order it through the Museum on the website in the

electronic shop or via e-mail.

A week later, on October 16, the exhibition "Anti-Jewish Knick-Knack, popular images of the Jews and contemporary Conspiracy Theories - the Finkelstein Collection and its Context" was opened to the public.

The New York *Forward* reviewed the exhibition the

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## A LETTER...

*(Continued from page 1)*

been updated since the museum first opened in 1991. The staff has been hard at work developing plans for this major overall of the permanent exhibition. This is a huge undertaking that will require contributions from many public and private sources. The museum staff has asked us to assist by raising significant funds specifically for this project and I will be in touch with you all about that in a separate mailing.

Personally, 2006 is shaping up to be a big year for me and my family. In March, we will be traveling to Israel to celebrate the bar mitzvah of our son, Joshua, at the Masada, a very beautiful and special place. We are excited to have this opportunity to learn more about our Jewish roots and expose our children to all that Israel has to offer.

Further in the future, we can all look forward to the possibility of another grand descendant's reunion in Hohenems, like the one that was held in 1998. Preliminary plans are being made to hold a reunion in the summer of 2008. Details to follow.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to thank Sue Shimer for her tremendous dedication and all of her efforts to put together this wonderful newsletter, which keeps us well informed about the Jewish Museum in Hohenems. I also want to thank Sheila Piccone, who so ably assists Sue in putting together the newsletter.

I wish all of you a healthy, happy and prosperous 2006. May 2006 be your best year ever!

Sincerely,

*Claude Rollin*

## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

*(Continued from page 1)*

same weekend and rated the Hohenems Museum as "one of the most innovative Jewish museums of Europe". (A copy of the article appears elsewhere in the Newsletter.)

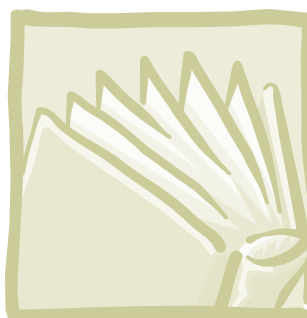
The opening, with speeches by curators Falk Wiesemann (Düsseldorf), Emile Schrijver (Amsterdam) and Hanno Loewy, as well as by Bishop Elmar Fischer (Feldkirch) and Bürgermeister Richard Amann, was attended by more than 200 guests.

Due to its success the exhibition will be on display until May 2006. A program of events with lectures and discussion by internationally renowned scholars and educators accompanies the exhibition and makes it an enlightening experience.

Workshops with pupils and students enable these groups to use the exhibit for a productive and critical examination of contemporary preju-

dice against Jews and their historical roots. This has relevance in the context of disturbing European traditions and their renaissance in the contemporary struggle about globalization and migration, domination and identity.

The exhibition is accompanied by a volume of essays, edited by Hanno Loewy: *Gerüchte über die Juden* (Klartext Verlag 2005, 23, 60€) and the richly illustrated catalogue by Falk Wiesemann: *Antijüdischer Nippes und populäre Judenbilder* (Klartext Verlag 2005, 30, 80€).



## THE READING SOCIETY

With its monthly Jour Fixe and regularly organized public readings by authors and scholars, the newly founded Hohenems Reading Society became (in a short time) a center of literary and cultural discourse in the region.

Different personalities such as Rabbi Schmelzer from St. Gallen, well known authors like Michael Köhlmeier and Monika Helfer, Swiss-Jewish Journalists Michael Guggenheimer and Bettina Spoerri and Hohenems based musician and writer Reinhold Bilgeri have begun an encouraging program that will prosper next year.

The members of the Hohenems Reading Society support the Museum by volunteering in the Museum's Café, which has become an important attraction for the Museum's visitors and local passersby, thus extending the Museum's outreach to new people. ❖

## REPORT ON THE MUSEUM'S ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

EVA-MARIA HESCHE

Beginning in 2004 the Museum's archivist, who previously had been responsible for the archives, collections and databases of the Museum, also was given responsibility for the library. The archivist is also involved in various interactions with descendants and visitors, who make use of the different sources and materials collected in the Museum. In addition, the archivist is responsible for the maintenance of the permanent exhibition and collaborates with the other members of the staff on several pro-

jects, such as special exhibitions. The work of the archivist has been done despite extremely limited personal resources. A half time position for many years, the position was extended to 70% of a normal work week in 2005, and an assistant was enlisted to handle the ongoing cataloging of the library.

## THE ARCHIVES

A large part of the archives was accumulated in the early '90s, during the first years of

the Museum's existence. New materials were acquired thereafter, but in declining numbers each year until the reunion of 1998. Since that gathering, documents from a number of private archives have made their way into the Museum's archives, from marvelous sources related to Aron Tänzer and from the Rosenthal family, as well as other individuals. One of the many results of the descendants' reunion was the decision to devote special exhibitions to the history of different

*(Continued on page 3)*

## REPORT ON THE MUSEUM'S ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

(Continued from page 2)

Hohenems families and personalities. The first of those was the large Rosenthal exhibition in 2002. The Museum obtained incredible material, most of which was unknown to the staff – such as documents, photographs, and postcards from the family archives of several Rosenthal descendants.

That exhibition also encouraged people from Hohenems and surrounding areas to provide the Museum (as donations or permanent loans) with objects and documents that had been in their estates for years. This included such material as letters from Harry Weil, precious prayer books from the Löwenthal family, the doctorate certificate of Hans Elkan, that – shortly before he was deported – he left with a Hohenems family hoping to retrieve it after his return, which, unfortunately never happened.

Among the many objects received in the last few years I just want to mention a few. In the summer 2003, shortly before his passing, Kurt Bollag donated the files of the association that cares for the maintenance of the Jewish Cemetery. In the summer 2005 we obtained – apart from a collection of books and further documents related to the history of the cemetery – the portraits of Kurt Bollag and his mother Jenny Landauer, painted by the well known Vorarlberg artist Fritz Strobl. Previously, in 2004, the Museum received an oil portrait of Rosalie Bollag, painted by the well known Swiss artist Franz Roderer, whose works are preserved in many museums today, including the British Gallery.

The growing collection of portraits and paintings also include several donations to the Museum that arrived in 2005. The Reichenbach family, for instance, gave us a painting of Hohenems from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Hohenemser family furnished a marvelous portrait from 1808 of Sarah Löwengard (née Neuburger), the sister in law of Naphali Hirsch-Hohenemser. The portrait of her husband is at the Landesmuseum in Stuttgart.

I also want to mention the prayer book from about 1800 with a hand written note of ownership of Salomon Weil dated 1851 (obtained from the municipal archives of Dornbirn) and the first edition of Rabbi Tänzer's book about the Jews of Hohenems with the Ex Libris of the Jewish Community of Hohenems. All these are small but important details of the heritage that keep memory alive and help us to understand the richness and diversity of the world of Hohenems' Jews. Precious personal documents tell the story of lives. Examples include the diary and letters from the Reichenbach family that we anticipate receiving shortly. Another important document is the kitchen book from the Jewish refugee camp in Diepoldsau, just across the border, where in the years between 1938 and 1945, Jewish individuals and organizations tried to supply refugees from the "Third Reich" with basic needs – and a little more on Jewish holidays.

This is just a small selection of the many items that enriched our archives over the past few years. These objects and documents will help us make our new permanent exhibition a lively experience for our visitors and will make our upcoming

special exhibitions a successful enterprise.

### FROM THE ARCHIVES TO EXHIBITIONS: AN EXAMPLE IN 2005

Beginning in 2004, the archivist devoted considerable effort to the preparation of the exhibition on "Aron Tänzer. Rabbi, collector and loving pedant." Celebrating the 100th anniversary of his seminal study "The Jews of Hohenems", the Museum examined anew this crucial source of its own being and the life and passion behind it. The exhibition displayed magnificent objects that Erwin and Uri Tänzer, son and grandson of Aron, lent the museum, as well as other objects loaned to us through the generosity of the municipal archives of Göppingen. These included photographs and original diaries, letters from Aron and his sons Fritz and Paul, the ketubah of his son Hugo and the album containing letters of sympathy after Tänzer's death in 1937 in Göppingen, where he had served as the rabbi for 30 years after leaving Hohenems.

This exhibition, after appearing in Hohenems, was presented in the Jewish Museum of Jébenhausen, a part of Göppingen.

### THE ARCHIVES AND ITS USERS: DESCENDANTS, VISITORS AND SCHOLARS...

A crucial part of the everyday life of the archivist is responding to the manifold needs of our "clients": descendants and students, genealogists and regular visitors, who want details. Frequently (and fortunately) such visits to the archives end with loans and

donations, as well as family stories told to us. Such information enriches our knowledge; the written stories provide precious information that assists us in our work.

A distinct aspect of our work is helping and encouraging descendants of Hohenems families with their own genealogical research, which we integrate into our database and treat confidentially, as required. We are pleased to obtain all the information that we can gather and use in order to help the families improve their knowledge of their origins and ancestry.

Most helpful in this effort was Prof. Felix Jaffé-Brunner from Jerusalem who insistently encouraged us to proceed. He also encouraged us to publish the list of Hohenems families on our website (Tänzer counted 60 families in 1900) and include the numbers of descendants living today and the countries in which they reside. This is only a tentative figure that requires ongoing correction and addition; at present we know of some 700 descendants all over the world, many of them proud to belong to the virtual "Hohenems community" today.

### THE DATABASE

With the support of the American Friends, we were able to undertake a substantial review of the computer programs, containing the database, which gives information about the Hohenems families and the genealogical information available. A first step was a commission to Niko Hofinger, who designed a new platform that allows us

(Continued on page 6)

# THE PROPOSED NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION

DR. HANNO LOEWY

*Originally established largely by non-Jews for non-Jews, the Museum recounts Jewish history in Hohenems, the only town in Central Europe which had a "Jewish" as well as a "Christian" quarter. Today the Museum has become a center for inter-cultural discourse for Jews and non-Jews alike, embracing a region that reaches from Zurich to Munich, from Konstanz to Innsbruck, and from Ulm to Bozen.*

*The Jewish Museum Hohenems is preparing to answer new questions and challenges by working to launch a new permanent exhibition on April 30, 2007. This major enterprise will require all the energy and resources of the Museum staff in 2006. They look forward to the continuing encouraging support of the American Friends.*

The existing permanent exhibition contains limited illustrations of the history of the Jewish community in Hohenems. The display of the history until 1900 is presented in a thematic order that emphasizes the relationship between the Jewish community and the Christian majority. It begins with the foundation of the settlement in 1617 and traces the persecutions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the development of religious practices, the rise of a secular school and community system, and the growth of individual families and their economic activities. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is separately represented in an essentially fragmented mix of biographical, thematic and topical material and is mostly limited to photographs and the text of documents. The current permanent exhibition often has difficulty communicating with

an increasingly international public.

A redesigned permanent exhibition will take advantage of new research and recent gifts of objects to provide a clearer presentation of the Jewish history of Hohenems. Thanks to the descendants in particular, objects donated from private estates give a fuller image of the Jewish world of Hohenems. The new permanent exhibition will integrate these objects into the exhibits. New audio-visual technology, developed since the Museum was opened, will permit greater use of insightful interviews with contemporary witnesses. The redesign of the permanent exhibition also will permit a closer integration of exchanged and borrowed materials to the topics of the permanent exhibition. In addition, as a result of the redesign, the Museum will be better able to meet the demands of live events. The attic of the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal will be useful as a performance space for events and presentations that in the past were possible only at the expense of a central element of the permanent exhibition.

The multifaceted contact of the Museum and the descendants of the Jews of Hohenems has made the Museum the center of a virtual community, whose cohesion is based, not upon Jewish identity, as in other Jewish communities, but on the common relation to family and a European heritage, a heritage that includes descendants who continue to practice Judaism, and those who themselves (or their forebearers) converted to Christianity, as well as others

who view themselves as agnostics.

The goal of the Museum will be to open the permanent exhibition to the pluralistic Jewish world, illustrating the cultural and social areas of conflict, demands of diverse interests in legal status, acculturation and assimilation, as well as the diversity of individual interests, collective imprints and cultural orientation.

The new permanent exhibition of the Museum, utilizing fully the materials recently donated, will display the evolution of Jewish existence in Hohenems and its surroundings topically, as well as chronologically, and will make it understandable to visitors by juxtaposing the past with present problems. The history of the 17<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the areas of conflict in Jewish history and Jewish life until the present time should be a full experience. Thematic and biographical installations concentrating on the presentation of key objects would be combined.

Jewish history will be fully recognized in all its dimensions:

- Distinct biographies;
- The development, traditions and transformations of the Jewish community;
- Its part in a larger society; the local, regional and developing European nations;
- And last, but not least, the transnational and transcultural character of a people organized in networks that cross borders and limits.

Topics such as equal opportunities, religion, economic participation, family biographies, community structures and community life will be directly

linked through the history of the items in the Museum's collection and the history of individuals, just as they are in real life. The narrative dimension will be presented in audio stations with commentaries that explore the history of the object and its relationship with the present.

The audio presentations will include concrete life histories of individuals and families, presented in mobile modules especially suited for communication. Therefore, life histories can be viewed and experienced in different ways inside the exhibition. Biographies of known and unknown people, who lived in Hohenems and whose history is related to it, can complement each other.

The common concern of the Museum and of the descendants is to maintain the memory of the successful as well as the failed attempts of human cohabitation, diversity and plurality, the richness of relationships, the drama of conflicts and common experience, of dialogue and exclusion, and also to recall the fatal persecutions. It is not easy to learn from history, but it is necessary to explore its richness and diversity in order to understand its effect on the present. The new permanent exhibition of the Jewish Museum Hohenems is intended to make a contribution to this goal. ❖

# IN A CORNER OF AUSTRIA, A CURATOR PLAYS WITH A TABOO

BORIS FISHMAN

Forward, October 14, 2005\*

The far-western Austrian market town of Hohenems (population 14,000) is a good place to take in a chamber orchestra during one of many regional summer music festivals or to learn about water-driven mill technology, once a mainstay of the town's economy. Less predictably, it's also the location of one of Europe's most innovative Jewish museums.

The director of the Jüdisches Museum Hohenems (pronounced HOE-nems), Hanno Loewy, doubles as the town's sole Jewish inhabitant. (Hohenems's 300-year-old Jewish community was destroyed in the Holocaust.) Since arriving from Germany last year, Loewy has transformed this provincial museum with a series of provocative, richly imagined exhibits. On October 16, he will unveil his boldest initiative yet: an exhibit of antisemitic objects likely to provoke not only those who oppose the educational display of antisemitica but also those in support of it.

Loewy's exhibit opens at a time of increasing skepticism among curators and Holocaust educators about the ability of educational displays of antisemitic iconography — medieval engravings, Nazi-era publications, modern-day political cartoons — to enlighten Europeans about the tragic consequences of such propaganda. In England and the Netherlands, for example, Holocaust educators have started to focus on more constructive iconography meant to celebrate Jewish accomplishment rather

than mourn Jewish tragedy.

"It isn't the duty of a Jewish museum to exhibit these things," said Bernhard Purin, a former director of the Hohenems Museum who now heads the Munich Jewish Museum. "The artifacts are made by non-Jews and address non-Jews. Jews are affected by it, but it's not a Jewish problem."

Loewy disagrees.

"Whatever we do, this imagery is out there," he said. "Treating it as taboo only makes it more mysterious. We are living in a world where antisemitism has gained significance in political discourse. It's part of our culture, and we have to face it."

Even those who agree, however, are likely to be surprised by Loewy's new offering. In contrast to the sobriety of most antisemitica exhibits, whose primary mission is a solemn call to commemoration, Loewy will present antisemitica "like commodities in a store, a lower-class antique shop where we go to buy and collect." The ashtrays, walking sticks and beer steins — drawn from the collection of Gideon Finkelstein, a Belgian Orthodox-Jewish businessman — will be displayed in weathered showcases that Loewy rented to create a suitably shabby setting. For centuries, such objects were as ubiquitous in European homes as Mammy and Mose salt and pepper shakers were in American households before the 1960s.

"These things were something people lived with every day, which gave them an appearance of harmlessness," Loewy said. "You held the beer mug or the walking stick — it was a paranoid fantasy of controlling the control-

lers, the Jews, who were seen as controlling everything."

The idea is simple, but revolutionary: Instead of battling to disprove the myths about Jews alleged by the antisemitica on display — the agenda of most such exhibits — Loewy's exhibit asks viewers to consider what myths may have motivated its producers and consumers.

Loewy's unconventional approach implicitly takes issue with a 1993 show sponsored by the Jewish Museum Vienna, which featured 5,000 antisemitic objects mounted on massive walls that arched over viewers. The looming display overwhelmed visitors, Loewy argues.

"You don't want to make these objects as powerful as their producers wanted them to be," he said. "We have a more ironic approach: We want to show them as part of everyday life — cheap, commonplace — and as a means of creating an identity. There are a lot of non-Jewish fantasies about Jews. They have to do with desire, longing, weakness, fetish culture. How and why do people need these objects to express their desires?"

The exhibit wishes to provoke reflection about the Jewish side of the transaction, as well; it presents Jews as something more than victims, though by means of a more ambivalent portrait.

"Why do Jews collect these things?" Loewy asked. "I think that, in turn, it has to do with controlling the antisemite, with disempowering the person who wanted to control you."

The exhibit also features ex-

PLICIT Jewish self-representations. Do modern-day mementos of sidelined Hasidic musicians, featuring hooked noses and gnarled fingers virtually identical to "antisemitic" productions, challenge our assumptions about what constitutes antisemitism? Why not?

At a time when Jewish monitoring groups continue to deride Holocaust commentary that doesn't mourn, in "exceptionalist" terms, the tragedy of its 6 million Jewish deaths, Loewy's post-modern, ironic, almost playful inquiry — which opens just days after Yom Kippur — amounts to provocation, if not heresy.

This is familiar ground for Loewy, whose German Jewish parents left Israel — where they had immigrated separately before the war — in the 1950s to return to Germany. Loewy's exhibits have disdained hagiography. For instance, a 2004 show celebrating internationally renowned Hohenems cantor Salomon Sulzer took time to ponder the self-mythologizations and vanities of an ambitious performer; a just-concluded exhibit titled "Jewish Kitsch" — a look at Jewish collecting and self-representation — opened with an interpretive dance by a local pantomime artist and closed with an auction of the displayed objects.

The result has been a steady stream of visitors to the museum — about 10,000 a year, by Loewy's estimation, with many non-

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## AP REPORTS ON ANTISEMITICA EXHIBIT

In addition, the Associated Press published an article about this exhibit. The article pointed out that the exhibit shown "in the basement of the Jewish museum has the feel of a cozy antique shop or an old-fashioned apartment." Dr. Loewy told the reporter that the kitschy knickknacks were "part of a certain coziness. They were meant to be cozy. It takes three to five minutes, and then people realize it's not cozy at all. The disturbance they feel when they realize that themselves is much more effective than if we were to put up a sign saying, 'This is dangerous.'" Dr. Loewy explained that the objects "were a way for their original owners to exert power over Jews, whom they perceived as threatening...They are in a way transforming a

fantasy of something dangerous into something you could control"

The AP reported on the interview of the collector Finkelstein, which can be heard in a separate room at the Museum. Finkelstein explained that the exhibit shows how widespread anti-Semitism was even before Hitler rose to power. "In the 80 years before Hitler, people in Germany, in Austria, in France, lived with anti-Semitism in their everyday lives...When someone like Hitler came and brought anti-Semitism to a climax, everything was already prepared. And I think it's important to show that." Finkelstein pointed out that today "there are books, there is the Internet, there are many other ways to disseminate propa-

ganda like this." Another exhibit room highlights some of these more recent examples.

Dr. Loewy told the AP reporter that, anti-Semitism is a topic "Jewish museums can't avoid if you don't merely present a Judaica silver collection, and I don't want to do that....It doesn't help to stick the head into the sand and pretend that this is not around."

The AP reporter called Uri Taenzer, the secretary of the AFJMH, who praised the exhibit, stating that it combats anti-Semitism by "exposing and demonstrating some of this stupidity that gave rise to anti-Semitism....If the exhibit reminds people of how ignorant anti-Semitism can be, then it helps." ❖

## IN A CORNER OF AUSTRIA

*(Continued from page 5)*

Jews among them. As Jewish watchdogs complain about occasional European indifference to calls for penitent commemoration, Loewy's inclusive, irreverent exhibits have allowed non-Jews to appropriate the tragedy on their own terms and to imagine Jews as something more than mere martyrs — as the heroes and villains that they were, as fully drawn, recognizable human beings deserving of sympathy.

But Loewy is no panderer. His exhibit also considers "those philosemitic ideologies like Christian Zionism that just turn around the old prejudice from a favorable perspective, but keep the fantasies about Jews," and features a modern kitchen containing antisemitic objects concealed in drawers and cupboards.

"It's a 'cleaned-up' room," Loewy explained. "In Europe today, there's a taboo about antisemitic expression, but that doesn't mean it's disappeared. Antisemitic vocabulary is omnipresent in other agendas, from criticisms of globalization to Islamic perceptions of the West. If you don't talk about it, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist."

Boris Fishman has written for The New Yorker, The New York Times Magazine and The New Republic.

\* This article originally appeared in the Forward, and is reprinted with permission. ❖

## REPORT ON THE MUSEUM'S ARCHIVES

*(Continued from page 3)*

to include the several databases we had, and their respective resources, into one database. The new consolidated database is now completed and accumulated data can be installed. In the future this will allow us to be much more efficient in the administration of genealogical and biographical information of all kinds and will enable us to help families with their requests.

### THE LIBRARY

Between the years 1999 and 2004, the library was essentially dormant, a "Dornröschenschlaf", lacking financial resources, although new acquisitions were registered. The lack of space and personnel made it quite difficult for visitors to work in the

library. Digitalization of the catalogue was required; a new location for the books in another space was essential. In 2004, the digitalization of the catalogue began and in 2005 the bulk of the library moved to the Museum's space in the Kitzinger house, just across the street. As a result, it became possible to install new shelves and a visitors' working place and we anticipate that this space for visitors will be equipped with a computer work station in 2006.

The old library in the Heimann-Rosenthal villa now contains the sources (encyclopedias, regional history, material for educators) and working libraries most frequently needed by the Museum staff during the course of ongoing projects. Moreover, it creates a conference room for the staff and others involved in different projects,

as well as a cozy and intellectually encouraging environment that can be and is used for regional Jewish religious lessons for pupils.

The digitalization of the library catalogue is almost completed. At present, the restructuring of the stack of periodicals, such as magazines and reviews, is underway. Rosemarie Bahl, our assistant in the archives is doing that with great care, and given that she is trained also in book binding, we are now able to begin the repair of books that are in need.

At last, after years of crisis management in Hohenems we are now able to take proper care of our substantial resources, our archives and books, the data and knowledge that will form the basis for years to come of our future projects. ❖

# THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF INNSBRUCK

GERHARD SALINGER

As is true of so many other locations, the history of the Jews of Innsbruck has had ups and downs over the centuries.

The days of November 9 and 10, 1938 mark the pogroms that took place in Germany, Austria and other areas under German control. Gad Hugo Sella in *Die Juden Tirols* describes in all details the events that happened during those days in Innsbruck. The small Jewish population there was subject to the most bloody pogrom, in relation to its size, in any German-occupied territory.

Already in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a Jew is mentioned as Mint Master to the Duke of Tyrol. In later years, Jewish traders and moneylenders came to Innsbruck from Italy and Carinthia.<sup>1</sup> In 1342, a Jew by the name of Salmen was granted protection by the Duke of Tyrol. In 1348, the year of the Black Death, persecutions of the small Jewish population in Innsbruck took place, but the community survived.<sup>2</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Jews are often mentioned in Innsbruck as bankers and agents of foreign trading houses. Specifically mentioned is Samuel May, who in 1578 received from Duke Ferdinand of Tyrol a Letter of Protection, which permitted him to establish his residence in Innsbruck. Later, his family followed him and he purchased a house. After the establishment of new Jewish residences on the same street, the street was called

Judengasse (Jewish Street). During the reign of Duke Ferdinand II of Tyrol, additional Jewish families were permitted to settle in Innsbruck and some even obtained positions at the Court.

During the short time between 1618 and 1623, Jews were permitted to establish a prayer room in a private residence. After the death of the Duke, the hostility of the municipality and the guilds prevented new Jewish families from settling in Innsbruck. Indeed, with the exception of two influential Jewish families, the Jewish population was expelled from Innsbruck in 1674.

However, only two years later, in 1676, some Jewish families, who had been expelled from Hohenems, settled in Innsbruck. Rabbi Tänzer mentions specifically the Dannhauser and Bernheim families. Shortly before and after 1700, more Jewish families settled in Innsbruck.

In 1714, at the behest of the Innsbruck city council, the provincial government expelled the Jews from the city because "they endangered the Christian character of the city." Only the brothers Lazar and Gabriel Uffenheimer could remain because they had donated a substantial sum to the city hospital.

In 1748, Maria Theresa confirmed the status of Innsbruck as a "Jew-free city." However, two "tolerated" families (the Uffenheimers) remained there and only eight remained in the entire area of Tyrol. By

1785, only four or five Jewish families lived in Innsbruck and not many more lived there in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1809, many citizens of Tyrol, led by Andreas Hofer, revolted against the Bavarian-French rule. The Jewish population in Innsbruck remained very small at this time. Nonetheless, this was an opportunity for the anti-Jewish mob to pillage and plunder Jewish property. Rabbi Tänzer mentions five Jewish residences and three stores, and attributes this action to religious fanaticism.

During the Napoleonic wars between 1806 and 1812, some rights were granted Jews by the Bavarian authorities. However, these were revoked after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. No additional Jews were allowed to reside permanently in Innsbruck and those who stayed overnight needed police permission. The situation improved after 1840 when some Jews from Hohenems moved to Innsbruck and established factories there.

The Austrian Constitution of 1867 granted the Jews of Austria equal rights. This led to an influx of Jewish families from areas ruled by the Monarchy, and prevented the municipality of Innsbruck from placing obstacles for Jewish newcomers.

Despite the influx, there were only 27 Jewish residents in the city in 1869, and only 20 Jewish families in 1880. The families included the Dannhauser, Schwarz, Bauer and

Steiner families. There were seven Jewish residents in Landeck, a town in west Tyrol, slightly west of Innsbruck<sup>3</sup>.

Beginning in 1890, the Jews of Innsbruck officially belonged to the community and the rabbinate of Hohenems. In 1898, a branch of that community was established for Innsbruck and that branch covered the entire province of Tyrol.<sup>4</sup>

Before and after 1900, the Jewish population of Innsbruck increased, as many Jews from Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia settled in Innsbruck. Meanwhile the Hohenems community was shrinking due to emigration. In 1914, an independent Jewish community was established in Innsbruck and Dr. Link, who was the rabbi of Hohenems and resided in Hohenems moved to Innsbruck. Around 1914, the Jewish population in Tyrol numbered about 55 families, and in the 1920s totaled over 200 persons.

After World War I, Innsbruck became the center of a pan-German nationalistic movement and National Socialism gained a stronghold in the 1920's, thriving side by side with latent religious anti-Semitism.

Dr. Link, the last rabbi of Hohenems and the first in Innsbruck, died in 1932. His successor was Dr. Elimelech Rimait, a native of Bochnia, Polish Galicia.<sup>5</sup>

*(Continued on page 8)*

1 Carinthia, better known as Kärnten, is a southern province of Austria.

2 The time of the Black Death, a.k.a Schwarzer Tod are the years of 1348-1350, when a pestilence epidemic swept through Europe, and in many instances Jews became the scapegoats and were held responsible for it.

3 In the 1930s only one Jewish family, consisting of two persons, lived in Landeck.

4 At that time, Tyrol, included areas called South Tyrol in what is now northern Italy, e.g. Meran.

5 Dr. Rimait studied at a Yeshiva and the Hebrew Secondary school in Cracow. He graduated from the University of Vienna with a PhD. in 1932, and from the Vienna Jewish Theological Seminary in 1933. He served in Innsbruck from 1933 to 1938 and emigrated to Palestine in 1939. There he taught bible and Jewish History at Ramat Gan and for 26 years was a member of the Knesseth. He died in 1987 at the age of 80.

# THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF INNSBRUCK

*(Continued from page 7)*

According to the Jewish Year Book 1932/33 (Jüdisches Jahrbuch für Österreich 5693), the Jewish population in Tyrol counted about 400 members, with 120 paying taxes to the community. The great majority lived in the capital, Innsbruck. In 1934, Innsbruck's Jewish population numbered 317 (0.5% of the total population). There was the customary Chevra Kadishah (burial society), a Jewish Women's League (Jüdischer Frauenverein), and an association of Jewish merchants (Verein der Jüdischen Kaufmannschaft). President of the Jewish community was Julius Pasch and Vice President was Richard Berger. Members of the Board (Vorstand) were Salomon Baum, Julius Meisel, Adolf Neumann, Josef Adler, Dr. Eduard Fuchs, Josef Schulhof, Richard Schwarz, Karl Bauer and Simon Graubart. At that time, Dr. Josef Link served as Rabbi and Teacher (Religionslehrer). Julius Pasch, who later escaped to the United States, remained President until June 1938. His successor was Richard Berger.

Shechita (ritual slaughter) was forbidden by the civil authorities. Due to the anti-Jewish laws in Germany, the Zionist movement grew rapidly in Innsbruck and elsewhere in Europe.

During the 1930's, the political situation in Austria deteriorated steadily. On March 11, 1938, Chancellor Schuschnigg resigned. The following day, the German Army occupied Austria. For Austria's Jews there was only one solution: emigration. Many of the younger Jews were able to leave fairly soon.

For older people, it was often not so simple. Jews in the provinces, including Innsbruck, moved, usually, first to Vienna. Among them was Dr. Rimalt, the last rabbi of Innsbruck, who was able to leave Austria from Vienna in 1939.

During the early months of the Nazi terror regime, the first priority was the regime's political opponents, including members of the clergy. This situation changed in November 1938 after the death of the German embassy official vom Rath in Paris.

What now happened was on the Nazi's drawing board for some time, awaiting only an appropriate opportunity.

In Innsbruck, the situation, as described by Sella was as follows:

In the early morning of November 10<sup>th</sup> at 1 o'clock, the leadership of the Nazi party, the police and the Gestapo (Secret State Police) were called to the office of the highest Nazi official in Tyrol, Gauleiter Hofer. Actions against the Jews were to begin at once and had to be finished by 6 o'clock in the morning. The police were told not to take any action against the perpetrators.

During that night, most Jewish apartments were plundered and damaged and the synagogue was destroyed. Three Jewish men were killed, one critically wounded and 18 Jews were arrested, most of them were in seriously injured condition. One married couple was thrown into the River Inn, but was able to save themselves. The husband was among those arrested.

According to a detailed description, seven Stormtroop-

ers in civilian clothes arrived at the building where Richard Graubart and Dr. Wilhelm Bauer lived. When Dr. Bauer opened the door of his apartment, he received many knife wounds and died on the way to a hospital. At the same time, this gang knifed Richard Graubart, who lived one floor up, to death. Richard Berger was an engineer, led the local Zionist organization and was, beginning June 23, 1938, President of the Jewish community (official title: Israelitische Kultusgemeinde). A gang led by Nazi officials Lausegger and Hopfgartner picked Berger up in a car and drove him to the bank of the Inn River. When Berger was told to leave the car- he probably recognized his situation- he resisted and was beaten until he died as a result of a smashed skull.

The deaths registered at the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde listed as the cause of death in the cases of Dr. Bauer and Graubart "chest injury" (Brustverletzung), in the case of Richard Berger "head injury" (Kopfverletzung).

The most seriously injured, who survived, was Karl Bauer. During World War I he was an officer in the Austrian army. He received knife injuries to his head from which he suffered throughout his life.

The above named Hopfgartner was sentenced in 1951 by an Austrian court to 10 years in prison. Lausegger confessed to have received an order from an SS leader Feil to "remove" Berger, but without use of a gun. On the way to an Innsbruck prison, Lausegger escaped from his guards at the Villach train station and was never seen again.

According to a Gestapo report

to the Governor (Landeshauptmann) of Tyrol, dated November 17, 1938, there were still 30 Jews in Innsbruck at that time. This list included seven who had non-Jewish spouses, 14 who claimed to be members of another religion and nine elderly or sick Jewish persons who probably had to leave Innsbruck soon thereafter. Following the events of November 1938, many Jews moved from Innsbruck to Vienna, some voluntarily, others under pressure. According to a Gestapo report of April 1939, no more members of the Board (Vorstand) of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde remained in Innsbruck.

During the fall of 1943, Tyrol's Gestapo Chief Werner Hilliger conducted another persecution against the remaining Jews, mostly Jewish women married to non-Jews. These women were arrested and brought to camp Reichenau from where four were sent to Auschwitz. Egon Dubsy, a former liquor producer, who was married to and divorced by a non Jew and subsequently institutionalized, was brought to camp Reichenau and personally shot to death by Gestapo Chief Hilliger.

Egon Dubsy's parents, a couple in a mixed marriage, committed suicide at the start of the new action. Through intervention from Berlin, Hilliger's private actions were eventually stopped.

With the emigration of about 250 Jews from Innsbruck and 150 deported to death camps, the Jewish community had ceased to exist.

The anti-Semitism evident from the foregoing discussion has only recently been re-

*(Continued on page 9)*



## THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF INNSBRUCK

(Continued from page 8)

nounced. For centuries Tyrol has been pervaded by a medieval form of anti-Semitism that goes back to the ritual murder accusation spread by the medieval Catholic Church. The "Anderle von Rinn" legend of ritual murder was perpetuated in church windows and became a sort of cult in the country. It was not until 1985 that this legend was finally renounced by the Catholic bishop of Innsbruck, Dr. Reinhold Stecher.

Only very slowly after the last war did a few Jews return to Innsbruck and, as in other Austrian cities, a small Jewish community was reconstituted. They had no synagogue, because the interior of the old

synagogue on the ground floor of Sillgasse 15 had been completely destroyed by the Nazis. The building itself was bombed in 1943 and subsequently demolished. In 1961, the Jewish community was reestablished, but it was the smallest in Austria.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, it was headed by Oscar von Lubomirski, a converted Polish nobleman. When reestablished, the community used a small prayer room in rented facilities.

In May 1977, the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Innsbruck had 21 members, 11 men and 10 women. Only 6 of those persons were members of the pre-war community of 1938.

A new promising development occurred in 1993. The city

rebuilt the former building on Sillgasse 15, as a multi-purpose building. Since that time the Jewish community once again occupies the ground floor, where the prayer room (Betsaal) is located. The prayer room is simply furnished and has room for 50 persons. During the dedication ceremonies, the Catholic Bishop of Innsbruck, Dr. Reinhold Stecher, who abolished the Anderle cult in 1985 and was instrumental in the reestablishment of the former Jewish community location, presented a candelabra to Dr. Esther Fritsch, the leader of the community.

The city of Innsbruck erected a large memorial in its center to honor the Jewish victims of the persecution. The Jewish cemetery is well maintained. ❖

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<sup>6</sup> The other Jewish communities in Austria were those of Vienna, Linz, Graz and Salzburg.

## IT'S TIME FOR A REUNION!



**ATTENTION, PLEASE!**

**CALLING ALL DESCENDANTS!**

We want to call your attention to a package that many of you will soon receive from the Reunion Committee which is organizing the 2008 Descendants Reunion. The reunion is scheduled for July 31- August 3, 2008. In the packet, you will notice a questionnaire requesting genealogy details. We very much

hope that you will assist the Museum and the Reunion committee by answering this questionnaire as soon as possible. ❖

## "YOU'VE GOT MAIL!"



If you would like to receive your copy of *In Touch* by email, please drop a line to Uri Taenzer at:

taenzeru@juno.com

## INNSBRUCK TODAY

Eric and Doris Billes visited Innsbruck in July of 2002 and July 2003. Their report follows:

"Innsbruck is the beautifully situated capital of Tyrol, a university city of about 125,000, surrounded by tall snow-capped mountains on practically all sides. We wanted to visit the synagogue, but it was closed. It is located on Sillgasse 15, in a modern building, in a good semi-residential area near the center of the city, close to the railroad station and the famous "Goldenes Dachl" landmark of Innsbruck. There was a sign at its entrance, a Hebrew inscription above its door, and a mezuzah. We then drove to the Jewish cemetery, located in a complex of cemeteries with a common entrance, with a Catholic, Protestant and Jewish section next to one another. The Jewish part was well maintained and had graves that were quite old, as well as some surprisingly new ones. There was a memorial to the Jews killed in World War I, as well as a small memorial for Holocaust victims. I took videos, but you can best view the cemetery on the web site [www.judenpogrom.at](http://www.judenpogrom.at), which, among others, shows the synagogue, the memorial on Landhausplatz, as well as homes of Jews of Innsbruck who were decimated on Kristallnacht.

Upon returning home, I contacted the synagogue by e-mail ([ikg-innsbruck.at](mailto:ikg-innsbruck.at)), requesting a visitation date for the following summer. They responded immediately, and so we were given a guided tour of the synagogue in July 2003 by a Mr. Liffschuetz, a young German Jew who has

settled in Innsbruck. The synagogue is located in a building with stores and apartments above. The building was rebuilt in the 1980s, having been bombed during the war. The synagogue is a small, simple jewel for perhaps 50 people. It was built and dedicated in 1993 by representatives of the IKG - Wien and the archbishop of Innsbruck, who, in an ecumenical gesture, also presented it with a beautiful, large menorah. The gorgeous ceiling has the celestial configuration of the date of the dedication. There is an office with computers, a sink for hand-washing and a small lobby. There are no regular services, but for the holidays they do have a min-

yan. Unfortunately, the sign outside the building had been ripped out by vandals, but was being replaced. There are many horse-drawn carriage tours in the part of town where the synagogue is located, and we heard several passing drivers point out the synagogue to their passengers.

We then proceeded to Landhausplatz, a nice -sized square of modern government and office buildings, apartments and hotels (with a casino). The walk there is very enjoyable, with lovely stores, as well as surprisingly modern indoor malls and restaurants. In the center of the square is a park that has a small triumphal arch,

which is dedicated to the Austrian war dead of both world wars. A few yards away is the memorial to the Jews of Innsbruck who were "debased, murdered and expelled" following Kristallnacht. It is in the form of a beautiful, modernistic golden menorah, about 18 feet tall, with its base inscribed with the aforementioned saying. It was designed in a competition by an 18-year old student at a technical high school and dedicated in 1997. We were moved and encouraged to see such a monument in a city that was known for its Nazi hordes. You can see the square on the website that I mentioned above. ❖



Doris Billes at the memorial to the Jews of Innsbruck who were "debased, murdered and expelled" following Kristallnacht.

# LIVING ACROSS THE RHINE, LILIANE BOLLAG

LUISA JAFFE-BRUNNER

Born in 1932 in Geneva to French parents, Liliane Adler grew up sheltered from the war. Her father died when she was 14 years old. Her mother, who had never worked before, took over her husband's metallurgy business. Liliane finished her secondary studies with a commercial degree. At the eighteenth birthday of her cousin, she was introduced to Kurt Bollag whom the cousin had met during a recent holiday in Majorca. After a short engagement, they married in Geneva in 1949. After her marriage, Liliane moved to Widnau, a small town in Switzerland, just 20 minutes away from Hohenems, where the Bollags lived. This was another Switzerland, more rural and where Swiss German is spoken. Her children, Yves and Nicole, were born soon thereafter. Liliane remembers Widnau as follows: "there were no sidewalks. There were a few factories, but just one small grocery store, one butcher and no possibility to buy fish. I had to drive all the way to St-Gallen to buy fish. Every week, my mother would send me a package from the market filled with zucchinis, eggplants and artichokes which were much more exotic than the carrots, cabbages and potatoes I could buy"

Liliane went to Hohenems for the first time with her mother in law, Jenny Landauer Bollag. Jenny was born in Hohenems and was looking after the grave of her parents. Her parents, Nanette and Josef Landauer, had owned a restaurant close to the Hohenems synagogue "*Zur frohen Aussicht*" [To a Happy Outlook]. Jenny met her husband-to be Jakob Bollag at the restaurant. Jakob<sup>1</sup> was a Swiss citizen working in the family tex-

tile embroidery business in Hohenems. The wedding of Jenny and Jakob in 1920 was the last to be celebrated in the synagogue of Hohenems. Their son, Kurt Bollag was born in Rankwell near Feldkirch on October 29, 1921. In 1937, when the last Landauer living in Hohenems passed away, Jakob and Jenny Bollag moved to Widnau, Switzerland. They closed down the embroidery factory and started manufacturing raincoats in Switzerland.

Liliane visited Hohenems after the war. She describes Hohenems as very run down in the fifties. Displaced persons were still living in Hohenems, some of them in Jewish houses. "When you crossed the border [Swiss/Austrian], you could see wealth on one side and poverty on the other" she adds. Her mother-in-law was helping the displaced persons. Soon after, when the displaced persons had emigrated, many to Israel, they were replaced by Turkish immigrants. The run down appearance of Hohenems did not change for some decades.

With many artistic and sportive activities, Liliane adapted very quickly to her new environment in Widnau. The family often went skiing in their chalet in Stuben (Voralberg). The circumstances of the purchase of the chalet are related to the history of Hohenems during the war. When the German forces occupied Hohenems, they took possession of the Bollag-Landauer house. The Swiss Consul of Bregenz, Mr. Lutz, intervened personally by explaining that the house could not be expropriated as it belonged to Swiss citizens. During the war, the German occupying forces paid rent to



Liliane Bollag with her daughter Nicole and granddaughter Dafna in Prague 2001.

the consul. He returned the money to the family after the war. With this lump sum, Jenny Landauer Bollag purchased a chalet in the same resort where she had learned to ski before the war.

Now retired, Liliane had a fruitful professional career. She first worked as head of sales in the Bollag textile business, Reguma. Later she founded her own business and represented the brands Ungaro and Valentino in Switzerland. As a result of the competition from products manufactured at a lower cost in Asia, Reguma went bankrupt, and her husband Kurt came to work with Liliane in her business.

Through the years, the Bollag family has been the only Jewish family residing in Widnau. The closest Jewish community is in St-Gallen (30 minutes away). Liliane says she never suffered from anti-Semitism, either in Switzerland or in Austria except on one occasion: "We once went with my mother to Lindau on

the Bodensee in Germany. The German customs officers searched us inside out. My mother had her hair in a bun and they even looked into her hair. I suspect they immediately realised that we were Jewish when they saw our passports. At that time, there were still quite a few displaced persons in the area. Some of them were engaged in smuggling and that is probably why we were searched. My mother was so angry that she never set foot again in Germany after this incident".

If her schedule allows, Liliane Bollag still takes part in every event organized by the Jewish Museum of Hohenems. Liliane knows the area well having lived in it for more than 50 years. She now lives in Widnau on her own since her husband passed away in 2003<sup>2</sup>. ❖

Based on an interview with Luisa Jaffé-Brunner, October 2004

1 In 1955, Jakob Bollag was a founding member of the Verein zur Erhaltung des Jüdisches Friedhofs (association for the preservation of the Jewish cemetery of Hohenems).  
2 Kurt is buried in the Jewish cemetery of Hohenems.

# IN TOUCH

JANUARY 2006



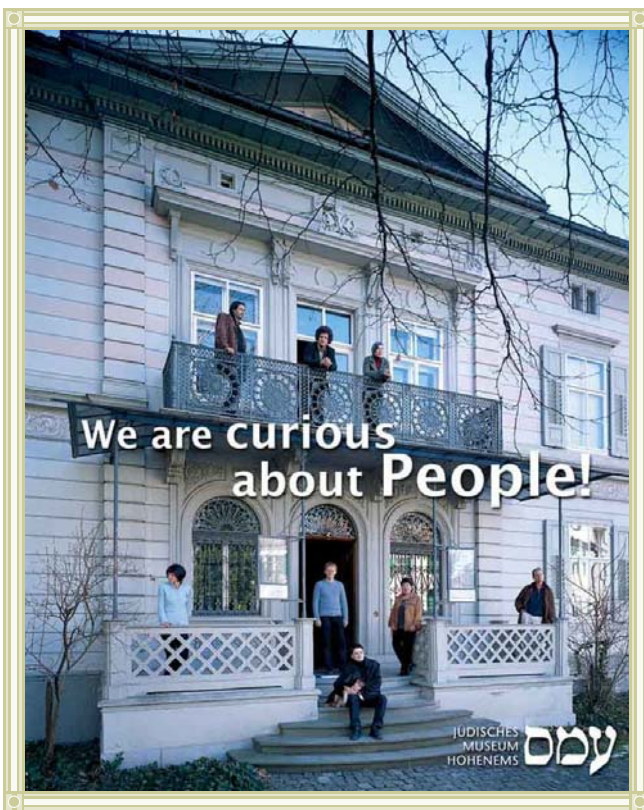
We're on the Web!

<http://www.jm-hohenems.at>

The Jewish Museum of Hohenems, as a regional museum, remembers the rural Jewish community of Hohenems and its various contributions to the development of Vorarlberg and the surrounding regions. It confronts contemporary questions of Jewish life and culture in

Europe, the diaspora and Israel - questions of the future of Europe between migration and tradition. The museum also deals with the end of the community of Hohenems, the regional Nazi history, the expulsion or deportation of the last members of the community, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Along with these fragmented lines of regional and global history, it is also devoted to the people and their histories and maintains a relationship to the descendants of Jewish families in Hohenems around the world.

The permanent exhibition in the Heimann-Rosenthal Villa, which was built in 1864, documents the history of the Jewish community in Hohenems which existed for over three centuries until its destruction during the era of the Nazi regime. The museum offers annually changing exhibitions and an extensive program of events. ❖



## JOIN US . . .

BECOME A MEMBER AND LET'S KEEP *IN TOUCH!*



During the meeting of the descendants of Jewish families from Hohenems in 1998, the idea to found the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Inc. emerged. The association unites the numerous descendants living in America and supports the Jewish Museum

of Hohenems in various ways. Annual dues are \$25. We hope to count on you to join today. Dues can be sent to:

**PO Box 237  
Moorestown, NJ 08057-0237**

Any additional contribution you could make would be very

much appreciated and thus enable the American Friends to continue to make important contributions to the Museum at Hohenems as well as to other endeavors designed to contribute to knowledge of the Hohenems Jewish Community as it was when our ancestors lived there. ❖