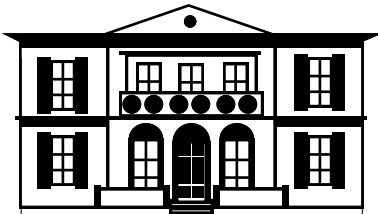


IN TOUCH

SEPTEMBER 2011

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

FRANCESCA BRUNNER-KENNEDY

Dear Friends,

This newsletter marks two significant milestones in the history of the Jewish Museum Hohenems.

First, Otto Amann, founder of the Jewish Museum Hohenems and former mayor of Hohenems, died on 18 February. It was his idea to save the dilapidated villa in the narrow old Jewish street that now houses the museum so beautifully. He will be missed by his family, the museum staff, and descendants alike. On a happier note, a glorious celebration took place in Hohenems to honor the 20th anniversary of the **museum's opening on April 10, 1991**. If, like me, you wish you could have been there for the July jubilee, please enjoy **Uri Taenzer's trip report**.

This issue left me wondering whether the world had changed in the last 20 years because of the museum. Are we all making the world a better place by supporting it? I doubt that anyone will come forward years from now

and tell us that the museum saved their life. Yet few people have the opportunity to do anything as dramatic as save a life. Still, we must do what we can, where we can. While anti-Semitism, racism, religious persecution, sexism, and intolerance exist, we must fight them with what tools we have.

In Kurt Greussing's presentation at the jubilee, he talked about five Jewish residents of Hohenems in 1940 making one of those fateful walks to the train station. He pondered what their neighbors did. Did they rejoice; did they hide inside; did they speak encouragements? And then he asked the question: what would we do? If the museum makes only a handful of people ask that question, who would not have otherwise, I think we have made the world a better place.

Though "our" museum is tucked into a small corner of the world where few tourists will see it, it



is one of only three Jewish museums in Austria. It carries an enormous responsibility. Because we descendants are often the only reason it garners international attention, we have a responsibility as well. To nurture it, to praise it, to support it in the face of those who question its mission, to shine a larger light on it than a small museum in Vorarlberg would normally get. We must make sure it is there for another 20 years to influence another generation.

Best wishes to you all for health and happiness,

Francesca Brunner-Kennedy
President, American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems ❖

MORE THAN 25 YEARS - THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

DR. HANNO LOEWY

This essay appeared in the Festschrift, the program for the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Museum's opening. It was translated into English by the author.

1991: It did not take long and Hohenems became a frequent subject of conversation. Between Vienna and Frankfurt, people talked about the recently opened Museum in the small town located in the Austrian Rhine Valley; and about the miracle that had occurred there: a Jewish museum openly addressing all those questions that had been rather avoided by the, albeit few, Jewish museums in Europe that existed then; first and foremost the question of who was actually speaking here, to whom, and with whom.

In 1994, I had been fortunate enough to open an exhibition in Hohenems, a show that we had sent on its way from Frankfurt. The visit to Hohenems turned out to be significant. At the time, of course, I had no idea how much so. But the atmosphere in the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal and the energy, sincerity, and humor that could be sensed there, the intense communication between the people who carried and still carry this Museum, all left behind a deep impression.

Today we celebrate the history of a Museum whose success has come thanks to the contributions of a great many individuals. Today we pay tribute to all

those who have made it possible for Hohenems to become a place signifying something we can be proud of.

This Museum comes as the result of an already long-standing passion, an existential concern to tell this story of the Jews of Hohenems. A wide range of people were the driving forces behind it all: citizens of a community with a rich independent history, which had just been granted the privileges of a town; scholars and enthusiastic laypersons who wished to recall a positive image of this Jewish past and of coexistence in this place; and a new generation of historians who had begun to ask critical questions regarding the state's history, questions also addressing the abyss beneath the seeming Hohenems idyll. Finally, a third, younger generation joined, young cultural scientists who dealt with Jewish history, with the Hebrew language, and the contradictions of Jewish culture—and who translated the evident polarization into new concrete inquiries into the Jewish history of Hohenems.

Thus, an intense, openly-held dispute preceded the resounding opening of the Museum and its first permanent exhibition in April 1991. On the highest level of discussion, fundamental questions concerning the representation of Jewish history in a museum setting were deliberated with

an openness that, at the time, was by no means self-evident. To what extent should the examples of felicitous coexistence be emphasized and to what extent could every-day anti-

Semitism, which, after all, existed in Hohenems like everywhere else, be addressed? Should the Museum, like others, acquaint the audience with Jewish life, even with Jewish religion in general? Or was not precisely that a generalizing look at "the alien," a look that would fail to take seriously Jewish experience in its concreteness, also in the concreteness of place and people here in Hohenems, but would rather reproduce stereotypes?

Should the community's end during National Socialism be emphasized or rather its long history before that? And finally: how should the fact be dealt with that the material witnesses of Jewish life, the traces of religious traditions in any case, had not survived National Socialism any more than had the few Hohenems Jews who had remained in Hohenems after 1938?



Hanno Loewy shown here speaking at the opening of the Museum's 2010 Mikvah exhibit

The young Museum did not possess a collection of its own. To a large extent, one had to rely on official records found in the state and municipal archives. Yet, unlike ten years before, when initial attempts to establish a Jewish museum in Hohenems had remained stuck in political trenches, all those contradictions and quite adamantly fought battles over interpretation could not diminish one fact: a shared interest by all, by almost all sides anyway, that this story *must* be told—in a public space.

Despite all differences, the museum association was able to combine the most different forces, to unite the most different individuals. The Museum was already before its opening much more than a Museum; it was a focus of political culture for the entire state, the stage for debates that were about fundamental issues, about

(Continued on page 3)

THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

(Continued from page 2)
the relationship between the “native” and the “alien.” Here, time and again, it was emphasized that this was a Jewish Museum that had been established by non-Jews for non-Jews. Well, that had not been entirely true from the start, and today it certainly is no longer true. Among the first activists were also people whose own family history included Jewish experience. And it is no coincidence that precisely the Jewish museums—not only in Hohenems—are nowadays examining and putting up for discussion the diversity of possible Jewish connections, **“identities,” and “cultures”** beyond religious tradition.

The Jewish Museum Hohenems, too, has long since found its Jewish audience, even if it might not exactly be the kind of audience that finds its fulfillment mainly in religious practice. Among them were soon enough also people who felt connected to Hohenems in a special way, that is, the descendants of the Jewish families who often had become **“citizens of the world”** as early as the 19th century. Marriage migration had linked them already early on to the Jewish communities between Lengnau and Buchau, between Gailingen and Augsburg, then between Trieste and Vienna, Meran and Zurich, Paris, London and Livorno, even between the USA and the Ottoman Empire. It seems as if the descendants of the Hohenems Jews had

just waited for that moment.

Without Mayor Otto Amann, who in the mid-80s brought to bear all his personal weight, his authority, but also his innermost convictions and feelings, this place, this Museum would not have received the space it was finally able to occupy in 1991. A professionally established, equipped, and operated museum, which could permit itself something, that is, the freedom not to limit itself to processing the past, but also to look at the present. Already two years after its opening, the Museum, together with the City of Hohenems and the project *KultUrSprünge*, focused on a topic that until then hardly any Museum in the German-speaking world had taken seriously. Immigrants were **still regarded as “guest workers,”** they were relegated, so to speak, to soci-

ety's guest room. Instead, the Jewish Museum Hohenems perceived them as people who see their future in Austria and who bring along their religious and cultural traditions and rightly claim acceptance of them. With the publication *Emser Halbmond* (Ems crescent), the Museum performed pioneering work **toward “integration”** with acceptance and participation—thereby taking up a question that had accompanied the Museum on a subliminal level ever since its establishment: the question of the role of the Jewish Museum in a present that is characterized by new minorities, new traditions seeking acceptance—and new resentments.

In 1991, one of the most intelligent exhibitions on Jewish history in Europe opened, told by focusing in an almost provokingly modest manner on the con-

crete individuals in this place, on the relationship between majority and minority, on the contradictions of coexistence. Of course, compromises had been made in the Museum. After all, the subject of religion had landed in a space where in a rather unconnected manner a concrete discussion of the various functions of the Hohenems rabbis was facing a rather traditional staging of a Torah scroll (with borrowed decorations that lacked any connection to the history of Hohenems). The exhibition's design, which presented Villa Heimann-Rosenthal both as an upper-class dwelling with an air of opulence and as an abandoned space, confronted the visitors with their own invasion of a private sphere that had been violently destroyed after 1938. Yet, not all visitors wanted to acknowledge this dimension. Many enjoyed the preserved upper-class furnishings of the parlor, the only tangible three-dimensional exhibits representing past life. Thus, numerous reactions reflected the tension between the shock over the Holocaust and the satisfaction of seeing how well Jews had lived.

It was the fascination of the abandoned villa, which thematically took up the fears of entering a place and at the same time was meant to reduce them. In Hohenems began, with the **Museum's opening, a process** of recovering history that took hold of ever widening circles here. There



Otto Amann with Kurt Bollag

(Continued on page 4)

THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

(Continued from page 3)
were projects to create inventories of the remaining structural witnesses in the former Jewish Quarter and at the Jewish Cemetery, but especially the project “*Ein Viertel Stadt*” (one quarter city) and the interventions in the urban space, which—with high visual appeal and intelligent irritations—directed the gaze toward the Jewish history of the houses and their former inhabitants: with all these highly communicative, the population involving projects, the Museum succeeded in turning a largely taboo topic into a crystallizing point for a new urban self-confidence whose significance for a revitalization of the city is becoming truly apparent maybe only now.

Initially, bitter losses had to be suffered as well. In the early 1990s, the old Bernheimer house probably became a victim of arson. But since the opening of the Museum, new attention has been directed toward the center of Hohenems: houses are now being renovated with attention to historical detail and with interest in what can be told about their history; new uses are looked for and found.

At the same time, the Museum itself became a place of public political culture—within the state and beyond. Its location, remote from metropolises and at the same time in the center of German-speaking Europe, made it possible to bring together people who

looked for precisely this: a relaxed, frequently even ironic dealing with conflicts and with fundamental societal issues concerning historical awareness and coexistence of people with different histories. Not always in the mainstream, but with a refined sense for what connects people, this house was able to become a meeting place of another kind: neither to cultivate shock nor a naive multiculturalism, but rather to develop the feel for and the interest in the potential that lies precisely in discords around conflicting heritages and traditions.

Already, a few months after its opening, the Museum developed innovative educational activities of a kind rarely found in museums at the time. From the start, the Austrian Federal Government supported them as exemplary practice. This educational work was not only geared toward typical visitor groups and schools, but also toward apprentices and thus toward everyday life in an industrial environment characterized by migration.

The first descendants of Hohenems Jews had already come here for the **Museum's opening**; not only the members of the

cemetery association around Kurt Bollag and the Burgauer family, which since 1954 had for a long time been the only bridge between the descendants and the town. It was Felix Jaffé-Brunner whose insistence on this connection brought about the launching of a decisive project in 1998: the Hohenems **Descendants' Meeting** brought here families whose links with Hohenems were already centuries old—and which had not ended when most of the Hohenems Jews left the place as early as the 19th century, as migrants looking for a better life as

central part of the Jewish **Museum's community** in a way that is rare in other Museums. Through them, this self-assured Hohenems Diaspora, but also through the devotion of people from the region who want to assure the preservation of the traces of memories, the Museum has become a gathering place, a custodian of remembrance that, multiply entwined, **“belongs” in the final analysis** to all, yet to no one exclusively.

When I came to Hohenems in 2004, in a felicitous moment, a lot was ripe that we



Brunner family descendants Lisette Bunner, Felix Jaffé, Lily and Teddy Reitlinger, and Hedwig Wahle (from left to right) visiting the Hohenems cemetery, April 1991

so many had done before and after them.

In the meantime, the descendants have become a

were eventually able to reap in the past seven years. After many years, during which the Museum

(Continued on page 5)

THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

(Continued from page 4)
definitely went through some crises, the funding body has been newly defined in the course of an active round of negotiations. With the new establishment of the funding body in 2002, with the by now also formal co-responsibility of the State



Stephan Rollin and Otto Amann, circa 2001

of Vorarlberg, and with the appointment of a first-rate scientific advisory board, the foundations were laid for a Museum that is secure in the long term and whose independence is confirmed. Following the establishment of the new funding body, the Museum association has turned into a dedicated development association.

The Museum was now able to take the next step with self-confidence as well as to newly define its role in the Villa Heimann-

Rosenthal. From guests in an abandoned house, we evolved into custodians of an auratic place. Part of its unique atmosphere is precisely the opportunity to not only tell about the polarity of destruction and good life, but also about the numerous contradictions, nuances, and alter-

natives, about the questions *unanswered* by history, to which only we ourselves can daily provide a new answer.

Instead of just telling a story that inevitably results in the destruction of life and life context, we can now also give an account of Jewish experience that points beyond Hohenems and beyond 1945: to the experiences of a Jewish history

marked by migration and Diaspora. Part of this history are those individuals who spent their lives in Hohenems in poverty as well as the upper-class owners of the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal, part of this history is life in this place, but also the migratory paths into the world as well as the inquiry into life patterns and social organization in transnational networks as are nowadays common practice.

With our own growing collection, which documents

the traces of this experience also in personal documents and objects, we were now able to newly inquire into the significance of Jewish traditions and religious practices. As a resource for the reality of a life marked both by loss and

acquisition of a homeland, in the context of a historically changing *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld), also the seemingly unshakable forms of religious life appear in a completely different light: changeable and negotiable.

For this new exhibition, we needed a great number of storytellers: a curator who weaved the various threads into a narrative web; architects and designers who found in the glass skin of a large showcase, in **which the villa's rooms** themselves became an exhibit, and in the wealth of perspectives a suitable form to turn visitors into active subjects of their stories; and finally also a writer and an artist who designed a tour for children, which has turned the Museum into a very special place for very young people and their families.

Employees were needed who were prepared to show commitment beyond normal expectations and who



Gathering at 2008 Descendants Reunion, photo courtesy of Tim Hanford

devoted their hearts and minds to assure the success of this experiment. People were needed who contributed their stories, documents, genealogies, and objects from their own experience as descendants, but also as refugees and escape agents, as Displaced Persons and as **Hohenems "natives."** And, of course, the numerous individuals were needed who helped us gather the necessary resources for this new beginning.

What keeps all of this together and alive is the heritage of a headstrong community of citizens of the world who have lost their hearts to a small town in the Austrian Rhine Valley long time ago. And whose valuable heritage nourishes our ideas of a world, in which people approach each other with respect, even when they seem **"alien" to each other, and** with curiosity about each other. ❖

CHRONOLOGY - THE MUSEUM'S HISTORY IN SUMMARY

July 11, 1951

The Berlin Chief Cantor, Magnus Davidson, who emigrated to London, President of the "Allgemeine Deutsche Kantorenverband" (The German Cantor Association), sends a letter to the mayor of Hohenems and asks that a memorial in memory of Salomon Sulzer and the Jewish victims of the Holocaust from Hohenems be installed in the synagogue, and expresses opposition to a possible secular use of the building.

1954

The Association for the Preservation of Jewish Cemetery in Hohenems is founded by Kurt Bollag and Willi Burgauer; since then the association has taken care of the preservation of the Jewish cemetery with great dedication. The cemetery is still in use today.

1954-1955

The Hohenems synagogue is turned into a fire station by the municipality of Hohenems. The Jewish Community of Tyrol and Vorarlberg sells their property in Hohenems, which had been restored to them only a few years earlier.

Feb. 21, 1973

In an article entitled "Vorarlberg's forgotten Jews" published in the "Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung", Kurt Greussing, following a suggestion by Arnulf Häfele, makes a proposal to re-

member Hohenems' Jewish history by means of a Jewish museum.

1976

During the first "Schubertiade" Festival in Hohenems, Hermann Prey installs a plaque commemorating cantor Salomon Sulzer at Sulzer's birthplace in Hohenems.

1977

The "Schubertiade" and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra organize the first exhibition in the premises of the former Villa Heimann-Rosenthal; it is dedicated to the Viennese cellist and composer (and member of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra) Joseph Sulzer, a son of Salomon Sulzer.

1980

A first initiative to install a Jewish museum in the former Jewish School of Hohenems is made by architect Elisabeth Rüdiger.

1982

The "Johann-August-Malin Society" for the Study of Contemporary History Vorarlberg is founded in Bregenz. The society publishes critical studies about the history of Vorarlberg, concentrating mostly on taboo subjects, such as anti-Semitism and the popularity of Nazism in Vorarlberg.

1982

The second reprint (first in 1971) of the work of Aron Tänzer, "The history

of Jews in Hohenems" (Meran 1905) is published, containing essays by Karl Heinz Burmeister about the Jews in Vorarlberg in the Middle Ages and Norbert Peter about anti-Semitism in Hohenems.

1983

The market town of Hohenems is elevated to the city of Hohenems and acquires the former Villa Heimann-Rosenthal. With this acquisition, urban renewal in the historic center is initiated. The future use of the renovated villa has yet to be decided.

Nov. 30, 1986

The "Jewish Museum Hohenems Association" is founded. Mayor Otto Amann is an enthusiastic advocate of the project. Beginning in 1984, impetus for this project came from several enthusiasts of Jewish history throughout Austria, such as the Hohenems Cultural Circle headed by Hugo Loacker, the critical historians from the "Johann August Malin Society" (founded in 1982 in order to examine the history of Vorarlberg in the 20th century), the head of the Vorarlberg State Archive, Karl Heinz Burmeister, and Kunrich Gehrler, the former head of the Vorarlberg Administration for Culture.

1987

An exhibition ("Rabbi Aron Tänzer – Scholar and Philanthropist, 1871-1937")

is presented in Bregenz on the 50th anniversary of the death of Rabbi Aron Tänzer, organized by the Vorarlberg State Archive in cooperation with the City Archives of Göppingen.

1988

This year marks the publication of the "Documents of the History of Jews in Vorarlberg from the 17th to the 19th Century" by Karl Heinz Burmeister and Alois Niederstätter; it included documents from the collections of the Hohenems Palace Archives.

1988

Roland Gnaiger is entrusted with the restoration of the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal and adapts the historic building through careful architectural interventions and renovations throughout, so that it can become a museum.

1989

Kurt Greussing is authorized to develop a museum concept and to start research with his team, to find objects and documents for a permanent exhibition. The director of the Vorarlberg State Archives, Karl Heinz Burmeister, who had published several studies on the Jewish history in the Lake Constance area, serves as academic director of the project. In autumn 1990, the project team, now including Bernhard Purin, Eva Grabherr,

(Continued on page 7)

CHRONOLOGY

(Continued from page 6)

Sabine Folie and Sabine Fuchs, begins work on the creation of the exhibition; architect Elsa Prochazka and staff in Vienna who had been appointed to develop the interior and exhibition design of the museum commence their work as well. The design studio A. & H. Haller (Vienna) is responsible for the graphic design.

October 1990

Eva Grabherr is appointed the first director of the Jewish Museum. The funding for the Museum is provided primarily by the city of Hohenems, with subsidies from the State of Vorarlberg. The establishment of the permanent exhibition is also supported by the Federal Government in Vienna and the province of Tyrol.

January 1991

Bernhard Purin organizes, on behalf of the Jewish Museum of Vienna and the State of Vorarlberg, **an exhibition, "Salomon Sulzer. Cantor, Composer, Reformer,"** which is shown in Vienna and at various locations in the U.S., Britain and Germany.

Oct. 4, 1991

The Jewish Museum Hohenems is opened to the public. There were many arguments prior to the opening about the concept of

the permanent collection; these make clear that there were conflicting ways of remembering the Jewish history in Hohenems.

1991

The Jewish Museum receives the Austrian Museum Prize.

October 1991

The Jewish Museum Hohenems – as one of the first museums in Austria – installs a professional department for museum education to **meet the museum's visitors' need for sensitive and innovative educational work**; that work is headed initially by Bruno Winkler, then by Helmut Schlatter and later by Tanja Fuchs. The education department of the Museum is provided regular funds by the Federal Government in Vienna (Ministry of Education and Culture).

January 1993

The project "Emser Half Moon," inspired by Johannes Lusser, chairman of the 'guest workers' committee of the city of Hohenems, is initiated by the City of Hohenems, the State of Vorarlberg (project "KultUrSprünge") and the Jewish Museum. Monthly supplements to the local community newspaper of Hohenems and the region relating to information and discussions about Turkish migrants, their cultural and religious traditions, social

issues and daily concerns of life are regularly published.

1994

The Museum starts collecting historical and photographic documentation of the Jewish cemetery, prepared by Arno Gisinger, Sabine Folie and Werner Häfele, as well as research in the history of the Hohenems Jewish-owned houses by Hans Gruber and Sabine Folie. The results form the basis for extensive online databases.

June-October 1995

Together with the Museum, Arno Gisinger and Roland Stecher design **the project "Ein Viertel Stadt" ("A quarter of the city"), that utilizes a variety of installations ("Illuminated Houses" and "Viewing Stations") in public space.** The project initiates both wide and locally based discussions about the traces of Jewish history in the city and the future of the historic center of Hohenems.

1996

Esther Haber is appointed Museum Director as successor to Eva Grabherr. Under their aegis, the Jewish survivors who lived in Hohenems after 1945 as displaced persons, were made the subject of an exhibition for the first time. The research of Thomas Albrich and Erik Weltsch also is publicly presented.

1997

Gerhard Lacha receives the **"Henry Ford European Conservation Award"** for the restoration of the Elkan house. In the following years, several houses in the former Jewish quarter are carefully restored.

Aug. 13-16, 1998

Initiated by Felix Jaffé-Brunner the first reunion of the descendants of Hohenems Jews takes place in Hohenems. The reunion is organized by the Museum in collaboration with Felix Jaffé-Brunner, Yves Bollag-Landauer and Stefan Rollin-Rosenthal. About 170 participants from all over the world attend.

1998

Stefan Rollin-Rosenthal, together with other descendants, organizes The American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems in the U.S. A regular newsletter, edited by Susan Rosenthal Shimer, publishes biographies and family stories as well as news about the Museum's activities and historical essays. The Friends support projects of the Museum with their donations.

Jan. 15, 1999

Thomas Krapf follows Esther Haber as Director of the Museum. Conflicts arise regarding various projects of the Museum, between the Museum's management and board, as well as between the Director and the Mu-

CHRONOLOGY

(Continued from page 7)

seum's staff. Particularly controversial is the plan to participate in the presentation of the "Wehrmacht exhibition" of the "Hamburg Institute of Social Studies" in Vorarlberg.

Jan. 7, 2000

Johannes Inama assumes interim leadership of the Museum.

October 2001

The Board of the Museum Association approves the Museum's new "mission." That mission had been elaborated and extensively discussed by a group of employees, board members and external academic advisors to develop a consensus about the Museum's function and goals.

October 2002

The sponsorship of the Jewish Museum is reorganized. The previous Museum's association is changed into a Verein, an "association of friends." The Museum is now controlled by a Board, which includes representatives of the City of Hohenems, the State of Vorarlberg and the "Verein zur Förderung des Jüdischen Museums Hohenems" and secures the Museum's future and its independence.

2003

An academic advisory board is established to provide professional support for the Museum's management and board.

October 2002

Otto Amann, the former mayor instrumental in the founding of the Museum, is appointed Honorary President of the Association.

Jan 1, 2004

Hanno Loewy is appointed the new Director of the Museum.

2004

The Hohenems' "Reading Society of 1813" is reestablished.

2005

The museum's cafe is reopened in cooperation with the Reading Society.

June 2005

The new Salomon Sulzer Auditorium, constructed in the former fire house, which was originally the Synagogue, is used for the first time – for a Sabbath service for Jewish students from Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

October 2005

On the occasion of the 200th Birthday of Salomon Sulzer, on 17 October, the Museum organizes a series of events, a major exhibition and an international cantor's concert, including Cantor

Marlena Tänzer, from New Jersey, in the Salomon Sulzer Auditorium.

May 21-27, 2006

Official opening of the Salomon Sulzer Auditorium. The former synagogue was partially reconstructed in 2003 in a joint project of the municipality and Gerhard Lacha, following plans of Ada and Reinhard Rinderer. The building now houses the music school "Tonart."

Apr. 29, 2007

The newly constructed permanent exhibition of the Jewish Museum Hohenems opens. Since 2005, the Museum's team has developed, together with Vienna based exhibition curator Hannes Sulzenbacher, architects Erich Steinmayer (Feldkirch) and Friedrich Mascher (Vienna) and design studio Stecher (Götzis), a new core exhibition, devoted to the evolving interest in the significance of Migration and Diaspora in the Hohenems Jewish history.

Questions about the ever changing interpretations of Jewish religion, the discourse about the meaning of laws, rituals and festivals and the tensions between tradition and modernity are now considered over time, illustrated by a time line of events that formed the

Jewish existence in Hohenems and the subsequent history of the Hohenems Diaspora. The 20th Century is given more space, enabling the Museum to present video installations about escape stories between 1938 and 1945 and the memories and views of descendants around the world. For an increasingly international audience a multilingual audio system is integrated into the exhibition. Finally, the new exhibition also contains a children's exhibition, presenting images and stories by Monika Helfer and Barbara Steinitz, which gets across the story of the Hohenems Jews to younger people.

2007

The City of Hohenems and the State of Vorarlberg arrange funding of the Museum in equal parts. The Federal funding is significantly increased. The Museum still has to obtain one-third of its budget through its own revenues and from sponsors and donors.

July 31-Aug.3, 2008

More than 130 descendants from all over the world participate in the second Hohenemser Reunion, organized by the Museum together with Luisa de Winne-Brunner and the Descendants' Committee, Pierre Burgauer, Claude Rollin-Rosenthal, Nicole Lichter-Landauer, Chris Angiel-

(Continued on page 9)

CHRONOLOGY

(Continued from page 8)

Brunner, Sabine Craston-Danhauser, Robert Amler-Rosenthal, Wendy Kaufman-Rosenthal and Peter Rosenthal-Presinger.

Apr. 26, 2009

The exhibition **"Did you see my Alps? A Jewish Love Story"** opens and turns out to be a major success; it was shown in Hohenems, Vienna, Munich, Schwyz and Meran in the following years.

July 12-17, 2009

Hohenems hosts the first joint international summer university for Jewish Studies (organized by the universities of Munich, Salzburg, Basel and Vienna in collaboration with the Museum); it has since become a regular institution.

Mar. 7, 2010

With the exhibition **"Entirely Pure!"** the Jewish Museum opens an annex

in the former mikvah, the ritual Jewish bath, that is next to the newly restored old Jewish schoolhouse. The schoolhouse now houses the Moritz restaurant and the Federmann auditorium, named in honor of Professor Moritz Federmann who brought the Hohenems Jewish school to fame. With **"Radio Mikwe"**, an internet based radio program, the Museum presents its first **"internet audio exhibition"**, running through March 2011.

October 2010

The Museum, in order to secure its growing collection for the future, installs new archival facilities in the former Kästle ski factory in Hohenems. Since its inception in 1991, the Museum functions as a trustee of the family memories, the photographs and documents, artifacts and memorabilia of many descendants. Bequests and donations

of documents, photographs and artifacts can now be preserved in an appropriate and accessible way.

November 2010

After many years of research in family biographies and genealogies at the Jewish Museum Hohenems (by Bernhard Purin, Hans Gruber, Eva-Maria Hesche and others) and at the University of Innsbruck (by Professor Thomas Albrich, Niko Hofinger and their students) the jointly developed genealogy database is published on the Internet. More than 11,000 members of Jewish families from Hohenems, Vorarlberg and Tyrol, with biographical data, migration histories and pedigrees are now accessible for research on our Internet database.

www.hohenemsgenealogy.at

May 2011

With the digitization of its historic photo archives the Museum secures its collections and their content by new technologies and prepares our collection for global accessibility on the Internet for the future.

July 2, 2011

With more than 500 guests from Hohenems, the region and from abroad, the Museum celebrated 25 years of the Museum association and the 20th anniversary of the Museum's opening.

The Museum is your museum, it is as successful and vivid as its community. We hope to share this experience for many years to come.

In the summer 2017 we will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Hohenemser Schutzbrieff with the third descendants reunion. Stay tuned!



Photos courtesy of Marcus Feuerstein

Below and left: the 20th Anniversary Celebration



DESIRED CHILD OR CUCKOO'S EGG? – THE ROAD TO THE JEWISH MUSEUM HOHENEMS

KURT GREUSSING

Presentation on July 2 2011, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. Translated from German by the author.

On April 22, 1991, a few days after the opening of the Jewish Museum, a short reader's letter appeared in the local daily "Vorarlberger Nachrichten." "Encounters in Hohenems" was the headline:

I was allowed as an old woman with friends from Zurich to attend the special moment of "the opening of the Jewish Museum in Hohenems." In my mind I have stayed at this place time and again, because I had an interesting encounter there as a young girl. I am Jewish and was then living in Germany. More than five decades ago. [– this must have been in 1938, probably shortly before the Nazi occupation of Austria –] I had the opportunity to visit the famous Jewish cemetery in Hohenems. I wanted to learn more, and they referred me to the historian Dr. Franz Josef Häfele. I got an abundance of

information, and before leaving the humble researcher he urged me strongly to leave Germany. I have followed his advice and survived. Dr. Franz Häfele has saved my life. With my recent visit to the Jewish Museum, I now probably have finally said farewell to Hohenems, but I will always remember this place with gratitude!
ANNE ADLER,
ZURICH – NEW YORK

It is stories like these, which sound so disturbing when you look at Jewish history in the 20th century. Because at the same time they remind us of those who unlike Anne Adler did not have the energy, the courage, and – yes, this too: the anticipatory fear – to try to escape to Switzerland.

This story therefore also reminds us of a day in Hohenems in June 1940. At that time, five people walked down what today is the "Schweizerstrasse" to the railway-station. The Schweizerstrasse in those years was not called Schweizerstrasse, and also not Brunnerstrasse as in the previous decades since 1909 (after the Jewish Hohenems family Brunner), but in June 1940 it

was the "Friedrich Wurnig Strasse" – named after the young Tyrolean SS-man who had shot the police commander of Innsbruck in the Nazi putsch of July 1934 and consequently was sentenced to death by an Austrian military court and executed.

On this day in June, it was the 1st June 1940, a Saturday, it was those five persons who walked down the Friedrich Wurnig Street, which today is called Schweizerstrasse.

One of these five was just over 40, another woman just over 60, the other – a man and two women – were in their mid-70s. Each of them might have carried a small, not too heavy suitcase. They were no strangers, but rather had lived in Hohenems for decades, some of them were even born here. Their names were familiar: the high school teacher Dr. Hans Elkan – that was the younger one – and then the old ones: Theodor Elkan, the head of the Jewish religious community, his wife Helene, furthermore Clara Heimann-Rosenthal (herself a Belgian citizen) and with nearly 77 years, the eldest, Sophie Steingraber-



Kurt Greussing

Hauser, also a born Rosenthal.

These five walked down to the station. They were not alone. For there must have been neighbors, bystanders, fellow Hohenemsers, who saw this wretched procession, or at least knew of their departure. What have they done? Assisted them in carrying their suitcases? Spoke comforting words that it all would not come so bad and that they were looking forward to seeing them again? Waved a sad goodbye with a handkerchief at the departure of the express train to Vienna? Or looked out behind half-drawn curtains? Stood at the roadside and grinned sheepishly? Were secretly or openly pleased at the prospect of a few apartments and houses becoming available?

To be honest: We do not know. And maybe that's a

(Continued on page 11)

DESIRED CHILD OR CUCKOO'S EGG?

(Continued from page 10)

good thing. And how would we react today, given our little daily opportunistic compromises, in view of circumstances far less difficult than at that time?

It is precisely such probing questions to the past, but also to ourselves, that made the establishment of a Jewish Museum in Hohenems not an easy task.

It is true – thanks to historically conscious persons in Hohenems such as Arnulf Häfele and Norbert Peter – there had been the serious desire since the early / mid 1980s, to create a facility to commemorate the Jewish community in Hohenems. But what that would mean in concrete terms was unclear, given all the contradictory positions and intentions in the founding association.

After all, the inhabitants of Hohenems for many years had not even wanted to acknowledge that the firehouse was once a synagogue. Inside the building, a dedication plaque with the following text was affixed:

*"Fire station and infant care home
built 1954 /55 ...
Mayor H. Amann"*

The mayor, Hanni Amann, here had perpetuated himself with a clear misinformation. The building

had been erected in the years 1770-1772. But, the conversion to a fire station had destroyed the historic character of this baroque building in the same way as the dedication plaque had twisted the memory of its function until 1938: namely as a synagogue of the Jewish community of Hohenems.

(It was only after April 11, 1991, after the opening of the museum, that a memorial plaque with correct information was installed.)
So how should one deal with this past?

Talk openly about it, including anti-Semitism in Vorarlberg, and consequently also in Hohenems? And talk not only of the anti-Semitism of the Nazis, but also of the one that already had been a tool of politics more than half a century before, first for the Christian Social Party and then for the German nationalists?

Or only refer to the gloss and highlights of the Jewish community and preserve the memory of a culturally and economically outstanding time?

This alternative for a Jewish museum also had to do with an unresolved question of space. Although in 1983 the municipality of Hohenems had bought the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal, the museum building of to-

day, and in 1987 the architect Roland Gnaiger had been entrusted with the renovation and restoration of the building, at that time it was still planned to use the former salon – in the Bel Etage – as the wedding room of the registry office and to set up an Alpine Museum in the basement. Thus the Jewish Museum would have consisted of just two memorial rooms – one for the composer and cantor Salomon Sulzer and one for the textile manufacturers of the Rosenthal family.

This memorial room idea was not meant strategically. It was rather unconsciously inspired by the intention, so to speak, to bring the "good" aspects of the Hohenems Jewish community to light – art and industriousness, **"Feingeistigkeit"** and upper-class philanthropy. But that would not have made an adequate account of the history of the Hohenems Jewish community. This community, it is true, had brought forth great personalities of cultural and economic life in the 19th century. But there had been just as well paupers, hawkers, small tradesmen, people who had been beaten by more bad than good.

So could a memorial room for a few prominent members truly represent the history of the entire Jewish community – including those "ordinary

people" who from the 1890s onwards were the target of the increasingly aggressive anti-Semitism and then subjected to the expulsion and extermination policies of the Nazis?

Memorials have the advantage that they can immunize themselves against conflicts. Their aura tends to protect them from irreverent questions, especially those on local history. War memorials in particular show us well how to produce an aura to protect ourselves from irreverent questions.

As you know, the Jewish Museum Hohenems has become a critically questioning, quite disrespectful museum, and no memorial. The path to the former alternative was not at all free of conflict.

It has become a museum, which sees itself as a place of dialogue, thus of arguments and not of silent, thus uncontradicted, remembrance.
So was this museum a desired child, or a **cuckoo's egg**?

If one considers the number of parents who are committed to this naughty being (and who are gathered here today in such great numbers), then it was a desired child.

And for those for whom it turned out to be a **cuckoo's egg** – or more precisely, a young cuckoo – it will hopefully remain so for a very long time. ❖

HURRAY FOR HARRY (I LEFT MY ♥ IN HOHENEMS)

URI TAENZER

AFJMH trustee, Harry Weil of Albuquerque, New Mexico was only eight in 1938 when his family were the last Jews to escape Hohenems to Switzerland. On the evening of Saturday, July 2, 2011, Harry, still spry at 79, captivated a rapt audience of over 500 enthusiastic celebrants attending the 20th birthday celebration of the JMH in the brand new "Loewensaal" located across from the palace. His brief, yet deeply touching presentation, was delivered extemporaneously in German. A PowerPoint display of photos of Harry as a child, of his elegant parents, of him in Navy and Air Force uniforms bedecked with medals and **of Harry's current southwestern lifestyle** accompanied the talk. He spoke of childhood recollections, of the beautiful synagogue with its eternal flame, and he also described the bitterness

of the times, of the brown shirts, of Onkel **Louis' disappearance** in spite of his desperate protests: "Ich habe nichts getan," "I didn't do anything." Harry also touched on his extraordinary life and how gradually the reality of the Hohenems Jewish Museum renewed a fondness for his "heimat." The closing words, which moved the audience and yours truly were: "I believe each person has two dwellings. A dwelling where one lives and a dwelling of the heart. For me, Hohenems is the Heimat of the heart."

Marlena and I were overwhelmed by the warm reception which greeted us from the moment we arrived beginning with an invitation to what turned out to be a convivial evening at the unique home and gardens of Bürgermeister Richard Amann and his gracious wife, Annie.

Due to a threatening downpour, a planned outdoor barbeque was miraculously transformed into a sumptuous dinner enjoyed as well by Hanno, Astrid, the inimitable Felix Jaffe and his ever effervescent daughter Luisa as well as our new friends Harry Weil and his delightful

wife, Annie. The presence of special guests, Deputy Mayor Gunter and Hildegund Linder insured that the evening before the "big event" was beyond merely "gemutlich."

Along with Harry, Annie, Felix and Luisa, we also enjoyed several more delicious times in the company of the Rinders, the Bergers, the **Loewys, Otto Amann's** family, Kurt Greussing and Eva Hafele.

Prior to the formal program at Loewensaal, we were privileged to take part in a tour of the former synagogue and restored Jewish quarter of Hohenems led by Dr. Hanno Loewy for Dr. Claudia Schmied, **Austria's Minister of Education, Art and Culture**. It was our first opportunity to see the remarkable



Marlena Taenzer, Lillian Bollag and Uri Taenzer

reconstruction of the former Jewish school recently completed by the Lacha & Partner GmbH. It features the upscale Moritz Restaurant, named after a noted educator. We were also impressed by the tasteful preservation of the ruins of the adjacent former Mikvah.

The outdoor champagne reception at the Mortiz was followed by well-attended presentations at the historic Jewish cemetery. Yves Bollag, president of the Cemetery Association and Johannes Inama, former Museum director, described the significance of the cemetery and the contributions of the former residents buried there for the benefit of Bundesministerin

(Continued on page 13)



Mayor Richard Amann and Harry Weil

HURRAY FOR HARRY

(Continued from page 12)

Schmied who then took the opportunity to explore this peaceful and hallowed place.

The over-subscribed late afternoon program was preceded by an enjoyable reception held in the ground floor open area of the Loewensaal. **The evening's program** was held in the spacious upstairs theater. There, **hundreds of the region's** museum local and regional supporters were joined by many dignitaries and public officials. Speakers were introduced by Dr. Hanno Loewy and Verein president, Jutta Berger. Burgermeister Dipl. Ing. Richard Amann lamented the recent passing of the city's former mayor, Otto Amann, who would have marveled at the success of the mu-

seum, which he fostered for many years as president of the Verein. Mayor Amann pointed to the **museum's** national and international impact, the importance of self-examination and remembrance. Creation of this museum in Vorarlberg was not an easy undertaking. "We are gratified by the important role which the museum has garnered in the cultural life of this city and beyond."

Speakers included State Gover-



Markus Wallner, Felix Jaffe, Claudia Schmied, Monika Reiss and Richard Amann

nor Markus Wallner, Austrian cabinet minister Dr. Claudia Schmied, keynote orator, Dr. Kurt Greussing, who first

Berlin as well as Harry Weil. Claudia Schmied, who flew in from Vienna, commended the museum as an international



Masters of Ceremony Jutta Berger and Hanno Loewy



Uri and Marlena Taenzer, Luisa Jaffe De Winn, Felix Jaffe and Yves Bollag

conceptualized the museum and Cilly Kugelmann, program director of the Jewish Museum in

center for Jewish culture. Markus Wallner reaffirmed the Vorarlberg government's backing for

HURRAY FOR HARRY

(Continued from page 13)



Kurt Geussing and Werner Deier. Photo by Marcus Feuerstein

JMH, a "cornerstone" of the region's museums. The many remarkable achievements engendered by the museum, its leadership and staff were lauded by all who spoke. The evening's program also included performances by a brass ensemble composed of students attending the Tonart Music School located in the Solomon Sulzer Hall as well as a delightful original play performed by 14 young students on the theme of a Jewish wedding.

Following the official program, the evening's celebration began in earnest under a perfect moonlit sky at the Museum in the Villa Heimann--

Rosenthal and its garden. As folks entered the museum, they were greeted by musicians performing in the balcony. Attendees palates were duly fortified by a "Sephardic Jewish" buffet

served under a large tent. Fortunately, a large variety of beverages, including beers and wine was available to drown the humus, olives and bread. Entertainment was provided throughout the evening by an accomplished group of musicians, the "Bauernfangern." As far as we were concerned the day's momentous

events came to a perfect close as Marlena joined the band in performing several songs including Bei Mir Bistu Shein and Hava Nagila.

In the days following the jubilee celebration, we were also impressed by the extensive press and television coverage which the event engendered. ❖



Marlena Taenzer with Bauernfanger musicians



Performance of a Jewish wedding. Photo by Marcus Feuerstein.

OTTO AMANN (Born 5 April 1926 in Hohenems, † 18 February 2011)

GEROLD AMANN

Translated from German by Julia Schertler-Dür.

Childhood and Schooldays (1926 - 1944)

Otto Amann, the son of Otto Amann, an embroidery manufacturer (1894 - 1969) and Mercedes, née Ammann (1903 - 1985), was born in Hohenems, where he also spent his childhood. His upbringing was strict and elitist. High German was spoken among his family and the children only had limited contact with the Alemannic environment to which Otto Amann felt drawn. Early in his life, he became interested in setting up a farm instead of taking over his **parents' embroidery factory**. Amann attended elementary school in Hohenems and his first high school years were spent at the Jesuit College "Stella Matutina" in Feldkirch. The last years before his "war A-levels" he spent at the junior high school in Dornbirn. His years of school in Feldkirch influenced him patriotically with the martyr-cult surrounding Engelbert Dollfuss. His **family's relationship** to the few members of the Jewish community who remained in Hohenems after the emigration

wave (following the state constitutional changes in 1867) were ambivalent. The liberal "**Schlösserles**" (Ammann spelled with double m = maternal line) maintained friendly relations with the Jewish elite - there are pictures of coffee parties in his **home's garden** and numerous documents. On the other hand, the "Junkers" (=Ammann spelled with one m = paternal line), as confirmed Christian Socialists were strongly influenced by traditional Christian anti-Judaism.



In any event, as Christian Socialists they were excluded from political positions from 1938 - 1945 during the period of Nazi rule.

War Years 1944/45
Otto Amann's life
between leaving school

and 18th March, 1945 is very well documented by numerous original army postal letters. On 1st March 1944, he was prematurely issued a secondary school leaving certificate ("war A-levels") and received a call-up for the RAD (Reichsarbeitsdienst- (State Work Service)) in Pirtendorf and Mühlbach (in the area of Pinzgau). He had a very bad memory of this time as he was constantly driven hard by a relative who was his superior officer and a Nazi sympathizer. Therefore, he volunteered for training as a reserve officer in mid 1944. As a reserve officer candidate he was sent to the barracks of Auhof in Linz in the beginning of June and to Znojmo in Moravia at the



army postal letter is dated 18th March 1945. Otto Amann was still in Brno and wrote that he would continue the officer training for the time being and would become an "ensign" in the foreseeable future. During the last six weeks before the end of war there are no documents left. It is clearly obvious, from a last conversation about this time in early 2010, one year before his death, with one of his sons, that he was at the front in the Volks-Grenadiers-Division "Ulrich von Hutten". This division was formed at the end of March/ beginning of April 1945. It came into operation in mid-April as part of the struggle of the 11th Army against the Americans in Bitterfeld and then continued with the 12th Army in the battle for the relief of Berlin. The division found itself in American captivity at the Elbe river. The prison camp was located at the



end of 1944. In February 1945, he continued his training in Brno. The last

(Continued on page 16)

OTTO AMANN

(Continued from page 15)

airfield of Stendal, which was turned over to the Soviets in July 1945. By this time, Otto Amann could not have been in the prison camp any longer since he had never been in Soviet captivity. Rather, he was transferred from American to British captivity and was busy during the summer with reconstruction work in Hanover. The surviving "Certificate de demobilization" was issued by the "Heer de Terre" in Bregenz and is dated 28th July 1946 (the original is family property). However, it must have been issued after he was demobilized, since Otto Amann had been enrolled as a student at the University of Innsbruck by October 1945.

Study period (1945 - 1949)

After studying in Innsbruck

for one semester, Otto Amann moved to Vienna to study at the University of Agricultural Sciences from which he graduated as an engineer of agriculture in 1949. As a student, he began actively to participate in

political discourse. He responded to the negative combination of church and power in the interwar years by actively founding the Catholic Student Union in Austria. He took over its leadership at his university in February 1948. Otto Amann also worked a nightshift in the railway mission of Caritas at the North West railway station and took part in the political training of the Austrian Farmers' Federation. He organised and held lectures for the Austrian Student Union and received permission to

political participation (in 1955 there still existed the basic resolution of the Catholic Mission, that leading members of their organizations, such as the Catholic Student Union, could not offer themselves as a parliament or national representatives and must refrain from any leadership positions in political parties at all).

Amann with his wife and children



Edeltraud Steiner. The wedding took place on 19th July 1952 in the Basilica of Rankweil. Initially, the farm was at a temporary location in the center of Hohenems. The plans for the



Otto Amann's distance from the political establishment continued in his later years while a member of the People's Party. He drew his political

legitimacy as a mayor from the direct support of the voting public rather than from the party.

Period before entering politics (1949 - 1955)

After graduation and

until 1951, Otto Amann worked as a teacher at the "Agricultural Volksbildungsheim of BMfUnterricht" in Graschnitz at St. Marein Mürztal (Styria). At the same time he worked to establish a farm, a task that he actually completed in May 1951. Around that time, during a train ride in Mürztal, he met his future wife

construction of an isolated farm in the marsh of Hohenems could not begin until 1953. Meanwhile, two sons were born (Otto jr. 1953, Bernhard 1954), followed by Edeltraud (1955), Gerold (1956), Andreas (1960), Christopher (1961) and Markus (1965). From 1953, Otto Amann taught part-time at the agricultural school in Bregenz Mehrerau. He received the teaching **certificate „for agricultural teaching and support services, in**

(Continued on page 17)

OTTO AMANN

(Continued from page 16)

general agriculture at junior to high schools, main subject field crop **production“ during** repeated visits to Vienna. The surviving teaching certificate is dated 4th July 1958.

From entering politics to mayoral election (1955 - 1965)

From 1955, Otto Amann was part of the local council of Hohenems; in 1958 he became a local councillor for agriculture and forestry and in 1960 vice mayor. In the fifties, he began his involvement as a farmer representative. In 1953, he was appointed chairman of the Livestock Association and in 1956 he was elected chairman of the Farmers' Federation of Hohenems. In 1958, he expanded his activities. He became chairman of the Vorarlberg Brown Cattle Breeders' Association and managing director of the Association of European Brown Swiss associations. In this position he made numerous journeys to neighboring countries, especially to Italy and France. In the summer of 1964, the former mayor, Hanny Amann fell ill. Otto Amann substituted for him until his death on 7th January 1965 and then

remained in that office until the municipal elections of incumbent mayors, which followed shortly.

Time as elected mayor (1965 - 1990)

In the municipal election of 1965, Otto Amann was confirmed as mayor, a position in which he remained until 1990.

Major construction projects, implemented during his time as mayor were schools and sports facilities in the district **“Herrenried“**, the recreation center **“Rheinauen“**, the hospital with 150 beds, the chronic health station, the home for the elderly and the wastewater treatment plant for the water board region Hohenems. Important for the long-term development of Hohenems was the early realization of a zoning plan in 1966. In the cultural sector, Otto Amann's most important legacy was the founding



of the Jewish Museum Hohenems and his **support of the town's** involvement in the program of the Bregenz Festival (opera performances and concerts in the palace)

and the founding of the "Schubertiade". He remained particularly concerned with the development of agricultural structures. Among other things, he made sure that the **state's agricultural** school was established in Hohenems. Because of its nationwide importance during

Amann's term, the market town of Hohenems was elevated to a town in 1983, an event that took place in **the presence of Austria's** President Rudolf Kirchschlaeger.

Amann and Helmut Kohl



The last years (1990 - 2011)

After his resignation as mayor, Otto Amann was primarily committed to his two "favorite children", the Jewish Museum Hohenems and alpine agriculture. In

(Continued on page 18)

Amann with Rudolf Kirchschlaeger

OTTO AMANN

(Continued from page 17)

1986, he was a co-founder and until his illness in the beginning of the new millennium, also president of the **"Verein Jüdisches Museum."** The Museum, which opened in 1991, became a renowned place, far beyond the borders of Vorarlberg, for exhibitions and personal encounters. In August 1998, Otto Amann experienced the reunion of descendants of the Jewish families of Hohenems, now scattered across the world, as a highlight of his efforts to remember the former Jewish community. The founding of the **"Vorarlberg Alpine Agricultural Union"** served as a network of Alpine agricultural activities. Otto Amann took over as chairman and remained in that capacity for 20 years.

Religious and social orientation

Otto Amann's roots in a piety affected Catholicism had prevented him from being captivated by the Nazis. Since he was only actively involved in the war from March/early April 1945, when the Eastern front had already reached Germany, he was not

involved in the war-crimes of the German Armed Forces. His distance from the Nazi ideology was reflected in his leave-taking from the troops in order to attend church services. After the war he was both privately and publicly orientated towards the ideals of a deed-orientated Christianity and always perceived himself as a practicing Catholic.

His social orientation was mainly derived from his religious beliefs. Speaking up for marginal groups was a priority for him. During his time as a mayor, anyone could personally speak to him. He promoted the construction of social housing and maintained contact with Turkish and Yugoslav „guest workers." He also pleaded for the establishment of public spaces that could be utilized by young people who were not organized into clubs. In terms of agricultural policy, he particularly supported small family farms and mountain farmers.

His Commitment in the founding of a Jewish Museum in Hohenems

I cite here from the written preparation and the resulting speech that Otto gave at the time of the Jubiläum „10 Years Jewish Museum Hohenems“:

„The Jewish Museum Hohenems has from those years on when the first ideas for such an institution were developed, always been instrumental for very engaged discussions and political arguments. Given the subject that is at stake here and in

Austria again and again, this does not surprise me. On the contrary, one should doubt the meaning of such an



Amann in Jerusalem



Amann with his wife Edeltraud (left) and Museum Curator Eva Grabherr (right) in front of the Museum

the light of the fundamental socio-political debates that are provoked by Jewish history and the way this history is dealt with in

institution, if it would function without such frictions and without provoking public debates, if it would

(Continued on page 19)

OTTO AMANN

(Continued from page 18)
function only as a
„History Museum“
without a direct
connection to our
present.

Already before the opening of the Jewish Museum, there was much debate on which subjects the permanent exhibition should present. Whether in the first place it should be the regional Jewish history, in which naturally the local anti-semitism and the forced displacement and murder of the Hohenemser Jews would play an important role, or whether it should be devoted to Jewish religion and Jewish history in the world. That **the project teams'** concept was realised, proved to be the right decision, given the wide international approval that it found since the **Museum's opening.**

Crucial was the decision to approve Eva Grabherr **as the Museum's first** Director. Only under her guidance, was the house made alive. In the course of time, the Museum evolved to a place of international significance. In numerous projects, the Museum tied together its regional anchor and always was at the peak of international discourse. It was in

those years that a profile was created from which **we profit today.**

After his health required a less active role, Otto continued carefully to watch the development of the Jewish Museum. The Museum, under Eva Häfele, his successor as president of the Verein, had a further upswing and that was continued with the establishment of Hanno Loewy as Director in 2004. This positive development

Christian Socialist at the time of the Austrofascists.

From my viewpoint, his insistence on his chosen way can be explained by his social orientation or from the influence of his grown children. Above all, however his mother Mercedes had a very great influence on him.

At the time of the city's decision to buy the Heymann Villa, his mother wrote to him:

should be called „Heymann-Haus.“ Frau Heymann is as far as I know a born Rosenthal; therefore from a famous Jewish family. She deposited in the Junkerhaus a large, noble piece of furniture that was given to her son, then living in Belgium. With the few remaining Jews, e.g. Elkans, as I learned later about the „Abtransport,, as Harry Weil put it, I said "From House and Hof, the heavens scream" Perhaps comes the time that I can describe the Emser Jews of my times.

Mama“ ❖



gave him much pleasure in his last years.

Otto continued following through on the project **„Jüdisches Museum“** particularly in the time of the Bundespräsident election of 1986, when the country was in the course of the Waldheim Affair from which a wave of anti-semitism gripped the land. This is even more remarkable in that he was a practicing

„Dear Otto,

With the Hohenemser Jews I grew up and so I was taught. Frau Löwenberg v. B. came daily to the little bench in the garden or to the house. Therefore I can barely endure when this once very noble Jewish house is named „Burtscherhaus.“ It



OTTO AMANN, HONORARY PRESIDENT

EVA GRABHERR

On October 2, 2003, the first long-term president of the Association of the Jewish Museum of Hohenems was named honorary president of the Association. The Association asked Eva Grabherr, the first curator of the Jewish Museum, to give the speech at this occasion. However, since she was, unfortunately, prevented from attending that evening's function, she proposed writing a speech to be read out by Eva Häfele, Otto Amann's successor as president of the Association. Shortly before that, Otto Amann had personally put forward Eva Häfele's name as his successor.

Translated from German by the author.

I really regret that I can't be here with you tonight. I would have liked to have personally paid my respects to you, Mr. Honorary President, and to you, dear members of the Association. Please accept my apologies for not being able to join you this evening, but a trip that I had booked a long time ago prevents me from doing so. On the other hand, Mr. Honorary President, it does make sense that **your** successor and **my** namesake is going to read out my speech for **you** right here, given the deeper dimensions of this museum's work. I know

from our conversations how much you appreciate Eva Häfele and how relieved and glad you were to pass responsibility for this museum, which means such a lot to you, into such capable hands.

I don't know when and where you decided on your successor—whose name is also Eva. It was, however, more down to coincidence that I was appointed the first curator of the Museum. I hope **you'll excuse my telling** the audience the secret you confided in me and my team, many years ago, on an exhilarating journey back from Innsbruck following the opening of the new synagogue. You somehow awkwardly admitted that I owed my appointment as curator to a case of mistaken identity.

A few decades ago, on the occasion of the Nibelungs exhibition at Hohenems Palace, you had met a young woman academic with whom you had a very interesting discussion about new theories on the origin of the *Song of the Nibelungs* and other topics of German literature over dinner. When you were interviewing me for the position of the first-time curatorship of the Museum in September 1990, you thought that I was that very same young woman, and you decided to offer me the job. You

said that you had then tried several times to resume our conversation on the *Song of the Nibelungs*, but I had never really shown any interest. Only then did you gradually realize that there might have been a mistake.

Other men on the committee who had also supported my appointment gave much more pragmatic reasons for their decision: they argued that they expected me, on account of my personality, to be more adaptable and manageable than the other candidates. It seems that the appointment board was not too familiar with the latest management literature. Otherwise, they might have heard of Tom DeMarco, who dedicates a whole chapter in his widely read book *Slack*¹ to the question of **"Managing Eve."**

In spite of years of parochial schooling, I have come away with a view of the creation story that differs somewhat from what the nuns must have hoped. In my view, the great heroic figure of the story is Eve. She is everything that I respect in a person: irrepressibly curious, courageous, undaunted by authority. Most of all, she is

intent upon personal growth, determined to fulfill not just some but all of her promise.

Remember the story of her "fall." She was told that she might eat of everything in the garden except one thing: She could not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The fruit of this tree was not food at all, but understanding. If she ate it, she would know things that she was not intended to know, hence the proscription.

Eve's response to this rule was, essentially, **"No way, José."**

It just goes to show how far off the mark you can **be if you don't do your** homework. And I would, of course, never have dared to refer to this story about the dangers of **"Managing Eve"** here if Eva Häfele had not long since been elected chairwoman of the board of the new Jewish Museum of Hohenems Institutional Association.

You, Mr. Honorary President, were my first boss, and I learned a lot—a great deal, in fact—from you and through working with you:

(Continued on page 21)

OTTO AMANN, HONORARY PRESIDENT

(Continued from page 20)

- I learned how far people can go together -- even in unknown terrain -- if they trust each other.
- I learned that you can form a common front despite many differing points of view if there is agreement on substantial matters, particularly on underlying attitudes.
- I learned how many things are possible -- including risks -- if you know there is someone there who supports you. And during those early years of my career, I learned self-responsibility because I knew that you had confidence in me.

Of course, I did not agree with you on everything. To **date, I still don't quite** understand why decisions of the association board should, if possible, be unanimous, which makes them hard to reach. I will never forget how--in the run-up to difficult board meetings -- you conducted intense individual discussions in order to prevent heated exchanges during the actual meetings themselves. And I will never forget with what finesse you were always able to successfully neutralize me prior to crucial board meetings, which were expected to spark controversial discussions.

Like most times, you were a few minutes late this time too (because cows **really can't be managed**

at all in the evening). You then told me in no uncertain terms to take a seat on your right and pulled my opponent over to your left, thus preventing us from choosing the seats ourselves. And now let me ask you, ladies and gentlemen, how can anyone go on the offensive and openly fight for a cause if they cannot even get a glimpse of their opponent? The president himself was sitting between us, unperturbed and adamant, and determined to conduct the board meeting without any long discussions. **I can't complain**, though, because you carried through the views of the team during that meeting too. However, after that evening, I got an inkling of what it takes for someone to remain mayor of Hohenems for over twenty years.²

But the actual miracle -- however small or great it may be -- is the fact that we were able to form a common front in a socio-political matter as controversial as the establishment of a Jewish Museum in a post-1945 Austrian province. Born in 1926, you had fought as a soldier of the German Wehrmacht during the Second World War and reacted highly sensitively during the years of the **"Waldheim affair"** to questions directed at the Waldheim generation. And then there was I, born in 1963 and social-

ized by the work and seminars of Professor Kurt Schubert at the Institute for Jewish Studies in Vienna. In this context, **"you" and "I" don't just** merely represent individuals but to some extent the positions of the various and sometimes very diverse protagonists who fought to establish and maintain this museum and still do. I believe that **it's the understanding we** share about the socio-political function of this museum--the reconciliation it has achieved for society and individuals too that made it possible for us to work together in such a way.

We were both in agreement about the dimensions of our work. It was decisive that you, Mr. Amann, a representative of the so-called Waldheim generation, were won over without having to fulfill this reconciliatory function at the price of historical truths and the concealment of fault lines. In the long run, not all of the people who laid the foundations for this museum together with you could be reconciled with this attitude. And that is the reason why they eventually abandoned the project.

Mr. Amann, it was an honour for me to be asked to write a speech on the occasion of the award of your honorary presidency from our Association. I look forward to hopefully many more opportunities to meet with you over coffee. And I hope that we will not just primarily discuss museum-related matters as we have done for many years but will also find time to talk about other interesting topics, too.

¹ Tom DeMarco, Slack, 2nd ed. (New York: Broadway Books, 2002) 26-27.

² Otto Amann was mayor of Hohenems from 1965-1990.



A LETTER FROM LILIAN BOLLAG

Dear friends:

It is with sadness that during my yearly visit to my daughter and her family in Australia that I heard of ex-mayor's Otto Amman's death.

I recall with great pleasure how much my late husband Kurt Bollag, in his role as board member of the "Association for the Preservation of the Jewish Cemetery of Hohenems" appreciated his many regular encounters with Mayor Amman during the course of more than 50 years.

I know, also from my husband, that without Mayor Amman's enthusiasm and perseverance, no Jewish museum would exist in Hohenems today. Thanks to him, "dark" moments of the city's history were brought to light and indirectly brought back to Hohenems those who had to leave their birthplace and perished in the Holocaust. The Museum gives them an indestructible place in the history of the Jews in Hohenems.

Last, but not least, Otto Amman was always extremely supportive of the efforts to preserve the Jewish Cemetery and therefore the Jewish community is to some extent still "active" in this city. I will always have a fond memory full of thanks for all his activities, and mainly his courage to do things at times when doing them was not an easy undertaking.

Liliane Bollag, Widnau/
SG ❖



EULOGY FOR OTTO AMANN

DR. HANNO LOEWY

Delivered on February 24, 2011 at St. Karl's Parish Church.

Translated from German by Rega Wood.

Beloved Otto Amann, grieving family, fellow mourners:

Sometimes we have the feeling that we have come too late -- hopelessly too late, when we bury someone dear whom we wanted to know better or with whom we still have much to discuss and experience. Or when we take leave of someone we wish we had known better. Sometimes we also have this feeling that we have begun

something new, something that we should have done long ago. I believe that Otto Amann, himself, also sometimes had this feeling, particularly when more than twenty-five years ago he decided to dedicate himself to the Jewish Museum. At the **outset, Otto Amann's** decision to put his heart into this project and dedicate the weight of his personality and his office to it brought him difficulties as well as joys, and it did not always make friends for him.

When Otto Amann decided to rescue the somewhat dilapidated Villa in the narrow old Jewish street that is now our Mu-

seum, he probably did not himself know where that decision would lead him -- and us with him. But something led him to take this decision. Whether it was God or simply a good spirit, I do not know. At any rate, he was a strong man capable of a feeling of humble gratitude. And surely he was moved by a deep belief, a belief that made him a man of broad sympathies rather than narrow minded, open to others rather than closed off from the rest of humanity.

Twenty-five years ago when the idea of a Jewish Museum was first discussed by quite varied people in Hohenems and

Vorarlberg, of different backgrounds and diverse political convictions in an attempt to realize a utopian ideal, Otto Amann still did not yet know what would come of those discussions. But, he put all his strength into the attempt to achieve this ideal, and that was no small contribution.

What must have moved Otto Amann was the feeling that even if we were too late -- indeed, precisely in such cases -- we must make it our task to realize the ideal. It was a task that began with gratitude, as he once wrote; he wanted to dedicate the Museum as a

(Continued on page 23)

EULOGY FOR OTTO AMANN

(Continued from page 22)

memorial of gratitude to those who had contributed so much toward the well-being of the city.

Otto Amann's own early experiences moved him deeply: the disappearance of the Elkan family and what he later learned about this

"disappearance," the disappearance of some of his own relatives, whom the National Socialists, the Nazis, regarded as "creatures unworthy of life," and killed in the "Euthanasia" program. The war years he experienced as a time of senseless military campaigns of conquest that left behind only suffering and rubble. And after the war there were political disillusionments and disappointments too. By the end of his active political life, Otto Amann's experiences prompted him to work for a space where people could confront these experiences and these memories with respect.

Otto Amann wanted to provide a dignified memorial commemorating this history at a time when this history was treated in a particularly disrespectful manner. In 1993, I visited the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal for the first time on a visit from Frankfurt. As I experienced the Museum, and met the people who supported it, I was deeply

struck by this respect. I had never before encountered the energy and intelligence that animated this enterprise. In the metropolis, willful smugness seldom permitted such concentration, and it was perhaps easier for strangers to recognize this treasure.

I met Otto Amann for the first time at the opening of an exhibit we prepared in 1994. At that time I did not know how important that meeting -- and the achievement to which he had contributed so decisively -- would once turn out for me personally. But, I felt his strength and his earnestness and the determination that filled those around him with awe and perhaps even with a certain resistance. Here was a man who did not make things easy for himself and for others. As we noticed, he was even great when he was mistaken. Many errors proved to be productive in the long run. Otto Amann was a Mensch, emphatically a Mensch, in the Yiddish sense of the term. Sometimes we have the feeling that we have come not too late but too early. Otto Amann did not just want the Museum he left behind to show his gratitude and respect for those who had disappeared. He also wanted to build bridges to the present and to the future. For him it was about re-

spect and regard for the other and so it was also about hope. This hope today is for the other as immigrant, not the least for Muslim immigrants, whom we hope will be encountered with regard for what they have to offer the community. Only with such an attitude can we expect respect for the rules of civility, which we should demand not only from others but also from ourselves.

For these practices of civilization, too, we need a place, a space, and Otto Amann intended the Jewish Museum to be such a place. In his words: a touchstone for the community, as it accepts others as fellow **human beings ... To** found and support a Jewish Museum is thus also an acknowledgement that the acceptance of others is now as always a real challenge.

Seven years ago when I met Otto Amann again, this time now as the director of the Museum, at his home -- **on his "farm,"** as he said smiling -- I felt again that strength. But, at the same time I felt that he had begun to let go, a long and difficult process for him that made me sad. He was very interested in the project about which I spoke with him, an exhibition dealing with the immigrant workers in Vorarlberg and not least in the

Jewish quarter of Hohenems. It had his lively support even though he knew again that it was too early to know what would come of it.

This must have been how it was in 1997 when he met Felix Jaffé for the first time. Felix Jaffé, a descendant of the Hohenems Brunner family, dreamed of bringing all the descendants of the Hohenems Jewish families, from all over the world to a reunion in Hohenems. This dream, too, has now twice been realized. Whether or not **Otto Amann's further** hope that there can again be a real Jewish community in Voralberg is realized, he will not be there himself to observe. But, no one knows what may come from the existing fragile beginnings.

Throughout our lives, we often have the feeling that we are too late, and we always die too early. But Otto Amann left behind a place for us, a space, and a stage. He also left behind a large family, who have inherited his love for this city but also his obstinate pride and his broad perspective. This gives us hope that we may be neither too late nor too early, but at just the right, decisive moment. If only we take the time. ❖

EULOGY FOR OTTO AMANN

FELIX JAFFE

Read by Hanno Loewy on February 24, 2011 at St. Karl Parish Church, Hohenems, Austria.

Translated into English by the author.

Dear family,

I find it difficult to write these lines, as Otto Amann's loss touches me deeply. His last years were not easy for him, his family and all the visitors who like myself saw him as frequently as possible. But my remembrance goes back much further in time. From our first encounter about the 1998 former Hohenems families meeting, he became a good and steady friend. I will certainly not forget

him but keep him in my thoughts. His visit with Mrs. Amann to my home in Jerusalem was a significant event which remains deeply engraved in my memory.

For many years he was an energetic mayor, and in the beginning the lonely initiator of the Jewish Museum, which owes him everything, but really everything.

In his important position he was positive and successful. He must have felt that in recent years the old and lively Jewish Hohenems world was not forgotten, but even resuscitated to some extent. As an active member of the Brunner family descen-

dants, I soon understood that up to the end he was the central figure of the whole idea. As a Brunner and Rosenthal descendant, and with many other members of our families, I am of course most grateful for his continuous efforts.

As you all know, Otto Amann was a good and loving father in a large and diversified family, which remained completely homogenous. We should not forget his wife, who gently but firmly kept all her children close to each other.

However he was not only the father of his own family, but the well known and respected godfather

of numerous Hohenems descendants who at present live scattered in the whole world, from Austria to Spain, from California to Belgium and Italy. They have not forgotten their origin. All these descendants — they are by now over 1000 and their number is growing — know what he has accomplished for Hohenems, and are grateful to him.

In our absence, my daughter and I wish to present our thanks and our deepest condolences to the whole family and his many friends.

Felix Jaffé Brunner ❖

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

DR. HANNO LOEWY

The Turks in Vienna. A European Jewish Community. An exhibition of the Jewish Museum Vienna, presented at the Jewish Museums Hohenems.
5 April until 2 October 2011.

The highlight of the year was definitely our exhibition about the Turkish Jews in Vienna.

1492 was a fateful year in Spain when 800 years of Arab-Muslim rule came to an end through

the final Reconquista; Christopher Columbus embarked on a journey that would lead to the discovery of the New World; and the Jews were expelled from the country, murdered or converted to Christianity.

Many of these Jews became Marranos, who remained in Spain, but kept their Jewish tradition in secrecy. The exiles found refuge in North Africa and some Italian cities, but mainly in the Ottoman Empire,

invited by the Sultans. Those who initially had left Spain for Portugal, departed from the Iberian Peninsula later towards the Netherlands and Northern Germany.

In the wake of Ottoman conquests, the Sephardim, as Jews of Spanish descent are called, were able to establish culturally and economically important communities in the Balkans. They remained in existence after the Turkish retreat from Europe. The rich

Spanish and Turkish-influenced culture of the Sephardim remained as well; to this day, it can be found in the religious and linguistic, literary and musical, but also in the culinary aspects of their life.

The peace treaties between the Habsburgs and the Sublime Porte in the first half of the 18th century introduced a new era in the relationship between Europe and Turkey. These new

(Continued on page 25)

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

(Continued from page 24)

economic and cultural relations were fostered by Turkish citizens in the Habsburg Empire and by Habsburg subjects in

authors, and musicians who shared their cultural heritage with the world. And finally, this exhibition tells about the destruction of these



The Exhibition, "The Turks in Vienna."

Hohenems Genealogy Database

Our database project is flourishing. More than 11,000 individual data profiles of Jews

neological database platforms in the world.

Find your ancestors, learn more about your families, and help us fill in what is missing. The database allows proposals and feedback, and we are glad to receive

Turkey, like the Hirschfeld family from Hohenems. In this situation, Sephardic Jews used the opportunity to settle in Vienna. As Turkish citizens, they enjoyed freedom of movement and freedom of religion in the Habsburg Empire.

The exhibition tells about the role as mediators that the Sephardic-Turkish communities played between East and West, between Orient and Occident, between Asia and Europe. In this respect, it tells about merchants and businessmen, and their innovative networks. Of course, it also tells about scholars, rabbis,



Concert with Turkish-Jewish music in the Sulzer Saal, May 2011.

communities. Even their memory was erased in Vienna and Austria, but also widely in the Jewish and the Turkish historiography.

from Vorarlberg and Tyrol, their descendants (regardless of their faith) and their families, are now included in one of the most elaborate ge-

updates from members of the Hohenems families at any time. Please visit the database on the

(Continued on page 26)

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

(Continued from page 25)

web at www.hohenemsgenealogy.at

Digitization and accessibility of the Photo archives

The Museum was approved for a grant from Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiiv) in London. Together with the funds from the Federal Government, this grant enables us to digitize the photo collection of the Museum. Christine Jost is working on this project together with Christian Herbst until the Spring of 2012. In the future, the photo collection of the Museum will be researchable on the Internet.

Summer University Hohenems for Jewish studies 2011 – a great success

For the third time students and scholars from

studies, organized this year in collaboration with the University of Munich, the University of Salzburg, the University of Basel and the University of Vienna. The program

mon Sulzer auditorium in the former synagogue – as well as the relaxing atmosphere of Hohenems, both in the Museum and in the old Jewish quarter.



A lecture by Anna Liphardt at the Summer University



A Summer University Class with Alfred Bodenheimer

Germany, Austria and Switzerland met in Hohenems for the Summer University of Jewish

this year focused on different aspects of Jewish migration throughout history, from the Jews of Babel to our times.

About 90 participants, among them more than 50 regular students and 25 scholars, enjoyed a week of intensive learning and discussion in the Salo-

New publications in the fall

Under the title, “Hohenemser Museumstexte” the Museum has started to publish various texts related to the core permanent exhibition and the Jewish history of Hohenems. We have started with two booklets, presenting the texts of the core exhibition, and the interviews with Descendants and other witnesses, presented in the Museum.

(Continued on page 27)

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

(Continued from page 26)

In July the Museum published the texts of the core exhibition in English, French and Turkish, helping our foreign language guests get access to the exhibition. In the fall, a new guide to the Jewish quarter of Hohenems will follow, replacing the outdated brochure on sale for many years.

News from the staff

In December, we had to say farewell to Eva-Maria Hesche, who has served the Museum for more than 10

years, first as a tour guide, then with the ever-growing task of building the archives and collections. She was appointed to be responsible for the local libraries of the Catholic Church all over the country, a very attractive task that gives her a great opportunity to improve education in Vorarlberg on a broad level.

To our luck, she had – for more than one year – the opportunity to train her own successor in office, Christian Herbst M.A., who followed her in

January. We are glad to have him on board. Christian Herbst studied history in Innsbruck with Professor Thomas Albrich and finished his studies with a book on a community of Tyrolian emigrants in South America. Since the summer of 2009, Christian worked with Eva-Maria Hesche reorganizing our collections and archives and the database systems (from the genealogy to the cemetery). He was responsible for organizing our new archival depot and the move to the new facilities in the

fall 2010. With Christian Herbst, we were able to secure from our board a full time post for the collections. This helps to develop our collections department to the needs of our mission. ❖

Tamara Stern performing "Lola Blau" by Georg Kreisler in the Sulzer Auditorium on June 14, 2011



The Newsletter of the
American Friends of the

IN TOUCH

ISSN: 1559-4866



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 first 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. ❖