

# In Touch

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE  
JEWISH MUSEUM HOHENEMS, INC.

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## Letter from the President

TIMOTHY L. HANFORD

Dear Friends and Supporters of AFJMH:

It is my pleasure to share with you this update on activities of the Jewish Museum Hohenems.

The Museum celebrated its 25th anniversary this year and, under Director Hanno Loewy, has continued to expand its role as an educational and cultural institution. The Museum is now welcoming more visitors annually than the population of Hohenems, an accomplishment not even the Metropolitan Museum of Art can boast with respect to its hometown.

Another important anniversary is approaching next year, the 400th anniversary of Jewish presence in Hohenems. As part of the celebration of this, the Museum is organizing the 2017 Hohenems Descendants Reunion a little over a year from now. Please block out July 27-30, 2017, on your calendars and make family plans to attend. Details about the reunion will be available soon on the AFJMH website ([www.AFJMH.org](http://www.AFJMH.org)).

I attended the last reunion in 2008 and can promise you that it's an experience you won't forget. You'll meet cousins from around the world, learn about the lives of your Hohenems ancestors, and, most importantly, have fun. Also, if you would like to volunteer to help out at the Reunion, please send a note to Susan Shimer ([sshimer@optonline.net](mailto:sshimer@optonline.net)).

The AFJMH is proud to have so many American Hohenems descendants as members. But we would be pleased to welcome more! Please send a note to your siblings and cousins and urge them to take a look at the AFJMH website ([www.AFJMH.org](http://www.AFJMH.org)) and consider joining AFJMH. And, with the planning for the 2017 reunion in full swing, I encourage you to continue your financial support as we support the Jewish Museum Hohenems in its vital mission.

Sincerely,  
Tim Hanford  
President

*Save the Date:*

**HOHENEMS DESCENDANTS REUNION**  
at the Jewish Museum Hohenems  
July 27–30, 2017

# News from the Museum

DR. HANNO LOEWY

## The Jewish Museum Hohenems Celebrated its 25th birthday on April 10, 2016

We are excited about the response to our work. The Museum means something to our visitors, it challenges views and self-images; it invites audiences to engage and it relies on the faithful support of people who love it. This is not only an institution, but also a place of life.

Reaching 25 years and now welcoming between 16,000 and 18,000 visitors annually gives us great pleasure, as does creating exhibitions that travel around Europe and the development of a data base that is used by thousands of people around the globe daily. It is also a challenge for us. Until we installed storage for our archives and collections five years ago and developed the little “annex” in the old Mikvah, the Museum had no chance to grow in space or in staff size.

In 2015, the Museum and its academic board started intensive discussions about the needs of the Museum, both to confront the challenges of its success and to develop its resources at a proper pace. Team building seminars and moderated planning sessions helped us to define the most urgent improvements—and intensive negotiations with the City, the State, and the Federal government in Vienna finally brought about major progress: we were able to rent an annex next to the Museum, offering space in our library for the public, for the staff, for our collections and archives, and for workshops and seminars by our education department.

More than that, we were able to expand our staff with three new positions: an archivist, an additional educator and a technician. These steps will help us further to develop and be prepared for the big events to come: the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jewish presence in Hohenems and the Third Reunion of Descendants to be held July 27-30, 2017.

At the same time the society in which we are active has been experiencing its own challenges and increased tensions. More than 80,000 refugees, mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan were accepted into Austria in the last several months, welcomed by many but confronting anxieties and prejudices from many others.

Our active role as an agent of mutual understanding and openness toward the experiences of “others” is more crucial than ever. Nobody can tell what the future in Austria, in Europe and the rest of the world will be.

It is you, the American Friends, who help us to keep faith in this task, to make Hohenems an inspiring and challenging place—for those who want to preserve its heritage and for those who want to build the future, living together on this planet. It is good to know we have friends in every corner of the globe.



© Photo courtesy of Dietmar Walser

## “A Great Debate,” April 8 – 9, 2016

Forty museum experts and friends from Austria and Switzerland, England and Germany discussed the future of the Museum in a two-day event in the Salomon Sulzer auditorium.

We were able to gather a large group of highly motivated museum connoisseurs from various fields, including museum directors and curators, university professors and academics, politicians and activists, as well as descendants from Hohenems. They engaged in an extensive exchange about the possible role of our Museum in society and the developments for the future.



## News from the Museum *(cont.)*

### Major Renovation of the Streets in the Jewish Quarter and the “Christengasse” Under Way

On April 25, 2016, the municipality started a major project to improve the urban quality of the center of town, beginning with the Jewish quarter and the Schlossplatz.

After many years of debates about traffic solutions, in 2015 the city council approved a plan to turn the center of town into a shared space, giving pedestrians priority over motorists, and developing the urban center for higher quality shops and cultural institutions. The streets will be covered with natural stones instead of asphalt, with fountains, benches, bike stands, street cafés and trees.

Also progressing are the renovations of buildings and the installation of new shops with crafts and food in the Jewish quarter, the “Christengasse.” Parallel to this development, the Schlossplatz in the middle of town is being developed as a center of recreation. This process began with the installation of natural stone steps down to the Emsbach in 2010 and the re-opening of the “Löwensaal” auditorium in 2011; it will continue by slowing traffic in the area.

The Jewish Museum—together with other institutions and initiatives such as the Schubertiade, the Homunculus Festival and the Emsiana—has played a crucial role in the development and recovery of the town’s center. We are making Hohenems an active center of culture and critical consciousness in the heart of the Rhine valley.

### New Staff Members

In July 2015 Dr. Anika Reichwald assumed the post as head of collections in the Museum.

Anika Reichwald, born in Germany in 1985, studied history, literature and Jewish studies in Tübingen and Zurich and wrote her dissertation on “assimilation and the representation of being Jewish in German extravaganza.” Raphael Einetter, who joined the Museum’s collection department on a 50% basis, now supports her work at the Museum.

Christian Herbst moved to Innsbruck for family reasons and is now collaborating with the Museum on the genealogy project and the further development of our database: [www.hohenemsgenealogy.at](http://www.hohenemsgenealogy.at)

Dietmar Pfanner joined the team supporting us as our new Museum technician, working closely with Birgit Sohler, who is now functioning as head of organization and public relations.

In September 2016, our education department will extend its staff as well, adding Tanja Fuchs (head of department), Judith Niederklopfen-Würtinger, and Angelika Purin. These new staff members will enable us to develop our capacities for long term projects with schools and youth groups, and our cooperation with companies in the field of apprenticeship training and also with colleges and universities training teachers.

### New Library

With the help of our public sponsors, the City of Hohenems, the State of Vorarlberg and the Federal government, on March 5 we were able to open our new library to the public—with a long night of Jewish literature. Combining this event with a book presentation, devoted to the attempt to save the public library of the Zurich Jewish Community, we were able to celebrate the “Jewish book” with hundreds of guests, many from Switzerland, and engaging writers and scholars with readings of their personal “love declarations,” commenting on books in our library and the library of the Jewish community of Zurich.

The new library is situated in the so-called “Engelburg” opposite the Museum and offers space for visitors to read, work and communicate with our archival staff.



Follow the blog of Jessica Piper (Rosenthal), the AFJMH intern, as she reports on her experiences in Hohenems: <http://reunion.jm-hohenems.at>

## News from the Museum (cont.)

### Odd • April 10 – October 2, 2016

Odd, or übrig in German is a glimpse into the collections — on the 25th anniversary of the Jewish Museum.

For the past 25 years, the Jewish Museum Hohenems has been gathering traces of Jewish history in Vorarlberg, Tyrol, and the greater Lake Constance area — thereby compiling a quintessential history of the Diaspora. Thousands of descendants of the Jewish families from Hohenems still feel a sense of connection to this place as part of their own history while viewing themselves as citizens of the world. Thus, they encourage our work and provide the Museum with substantial input.

Simultaneously, objects that find their way into the Museum's collection signify a discontinued history. Be it that family traditions can no longer be passed on, or objects have become homeless in the wake of changes in location and language, generational disruptions, and dispersal or otherwise, traditions and continuities have been violently torn apart or destroyed. Some objects are loaded with contradictory interpretations,

appropriations, and denials. They carry the traces of refusal and rejection such as the 1945 gravestone of a Bregenz Jewish forced laborer that had twice been stolen from a cemetery in Bregenz and disposed of in the Bregenzer Ache (the river crossing Bregenz) before finding, for now, a resting place in the Museum's collection.



Another item is the striking silver model of a locomotive, presented in 1845 to Heinrich Sichrovsky, Jewish head of the first Austrian railroad, and kept in the family until 1938 when his grandson, Rudolf Gomperz, who had made St. Anton a center of modern tourism, entrusted the locomotive to friends.



Rudolf Gomperz was deported in 1942 and murdered in Maly Trostinets. It was not until 2015 that the family in whose house the locomotive had been kept, handed it over to the Jewish Community in Innsbruck. Now on loan to the Jewish Museum Hohenems, it can be viewed at the Museum until its restitution to Gomperz' heirs.



Other artifacts are strongly connected to the families from Hohenems who migrated to other parts of the world and kept their family ties with each other and also with the town and the Museum — for example, a nightgown that connects generations and families between Hohenems, Switzerland and the US.



*Dr. Loewy with  
Minister Joseph Ostermayer,  
representing the Austrian  
Federal Government.*

The exhibition was curated by Hanno Loewy and Anika Reichwald, with the collaboration of Dinah Ehrenfreund-Michler, Raphael Einetter, Martina Häfele, and Lea Oberbichler.



# News from the Museum *(cont.)*

## Some of the Objects from Odd

With the exhibition “Odd,” the Museum provides insight into the wealth of various forms of memory and oblivion whose material traces are preserved in the Museum’s collection.

### Correspondence Ivan Landauer 1938-1941

A few months after National Socialist’s seizure of power in Austria, Ivan Landauer fled across the border to his sister, Jenny, and her husband, Jakob Bollag (born in Hohenems) in nearby Heerbrugg.

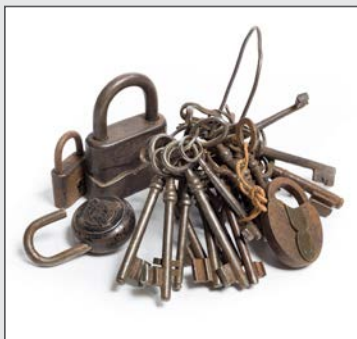


Landauer who had already spent his years of apprenticeship in Switzerland, settled again in Hohenems after the death of his wife and took over the inn of his mother, Nanette, “Zur Frohen Aussicht.” In 1938, the Nazis stripped him of the license to operate his renowned business. Thereafter, the house was put up for compulsory sale.

Landauer tried to legally immigrate to Switzerland—the beginning of a hopeless battle with the Swiss authorities. The latter refused asylum to most Jewish refugees on the ground of an impending “over-foreignization.” Residence permits were granted only temporarily and with stringent restrictions. Accordingly, Ivan Landauer was regularly urged by the Swiss immigration authorities to expedite his onward journey—otherwise he would face deportation.

These documents are not only evidence of the Swiss authorities’ attitudes, but also of Ivan Landauer’s repeated attempts to find emigration options in Europe or the USA, in Palestine, Southeast Asia or South America. His correspondence reflects his increasing demoralization. He never left Heerbrugg, dying there in 1943

### Keys and locks



This accumulation of rusty keys and locks was handed over to the Jewish Museum Hohenems in 2007 by an intermediary. According to the scarce information provided, its previous owner had been the son of a former “SS man.” Supposedly, the latter had, following the forced relocation of the last

Jewish inhabitants, collected and kept the keys and locks of their or other already Aryanized houses.

### Distinguished Service Cross of Amalie Hess

Postcards from Zurich, photographs, and family letters as well as picture postcards from the mountains, and importantly a Distinguished Service Cross, an award for her sickbay services during World War I, are among the items documenting the life of Amalie (Amelie) Hess in the Museum’s collection.



Born in Zurich in 1883, Amalie Hess moved with her mother Regina (née Brettauer) to Hohenems to live with her relatives Iwan and Franziska Rosenthal (née Brettauer) soon after the 1899 death of her father. From Hohenems, her path led her via Stuttgart and London to Munich where she served as secretary to Dr. Kraeke, a surgeon, during World War I. Amalie Hess remained in Munich after the war and continued to work for Dr. Kraeke and other physicians. In 1931, her aunt Franziska, who had remained childless, appointed her as heir of the “Franziska and Iwan Rosenthal” villa in Hohenems. She sold this prestigious urban villa in 1938 to the dental technician Johann (Hans) Schebesta

After escaping from National Socialism in the late 1930s, Amalie Hess lived with her elderly mother in Zurich; Amalie died in Küsnacht on Lake Zurich in 1966.



### Small Torah mantle (me'il)

Torah mantles not only serve as protection for the Holy Scripture, but adorn it as well. This unassuming example is a mantle for a small Torah scroll that probably had been only for domestic use. In 1905, this me'il was part of a large donation by Henriette Brunner, the widow of Marco Brunner of Hohenems, to the Jewish Museum Vienna. In 1938, the holdings of the Jewish Museum

Vienna were confiscated by the National Socialists; much was destroyed. The torah mantle survived and was returned to the Jewish Community Vienna in the 1950s; in 1988, it was given to the future Jewish Museum Vienna. Since it originated from a Hohenems family, this small Torah mantle was given as a permanent loan to the Jewish Museum Hohenems in 1997.

*(Continued on page 6)*

# News from the Museum (cont.)

## Some of the Objects from Odd

(Continued from page 5)

### Fragment of a Torah scroll

This fragment of a Torah scroll was used during World War II by a soldier from Hohenems as wrapping for a homeward shipment to Hohenemser Marktstraße 15. It was widely known that these were the Holy Scriptures of the just exterminated Jews. To break, appropriate, or mock their alleged power also symbolically seemed to have been a source of satisfaction to many. The Torah fragment exhibited here constitutes a part of the Book of Exodus.



### Bicycle of Markus Silberstein

This bicycle belonged to Markus Silberstein who had settled in Hohenems in 1935. When he was arrested and



deported in November 1939, he left it behind with his landlords on Burgstraße from whom he had rented a room.

Silberstein was born in Lviv/Lemberg in 1904 and grew up in Vienna. When he was seventeen, his mother passed away. A year later, his father went to Berlin and left his three children to their own devices. Markus Silberstein tried his luck as a photographer and sales agent. In July and August 1939, he managed to save some family valuables and transfer them to Switzerland., although Jews had been forbidden to do so. The valuables included his camera, silverware, money, and some

### Object from Elkan house

The Elkan house, probably built by the Löwengard family around 1800, belonged in 1940 to Theodor Elkan, the last head of the Jewish Community Hohenems. In 1898, Elkan had moved with his first wife, Betti (née Menz), into an apartment of this lavish townhouse. His son, Hans David Elkan, and his second wife, Helene (née Neuburger), followed. In 1940, the Elkan family was forcefully deported by the National Socialists to Vienna and murdered in Theresienstadt.



After World War II, so-called "Displaced Persons" (DPs) —Jewish survivors who remained for varying periods of time in Hohenems while in transit, for instance, to America or Palestine—were accommodated in the Elkan house. Most of the objects presented here, were left behind by the DPs, and were retrieved in 1996 during the renovation of the building. On display are twelve bottles that contained kosher wine—an indication of the religious practice of the DPs accommodated in Hohenems.

gold coins at a bank in the Canton of St. Gallen. It is unknown, whether the National Socialists knew about this transfer. What is recorded is the report of "Ortsgruppenpropagandaleiter" (local group propaganda leader) of the NSDAP Hohenems to the NSDAP district leadership on September 9, 1939 that:

"The Jew Silberstein is still here stirring up discontent and the wrath of many Volksgenossen (members of the German nation) when he listens to the reports in front of the post office and hears with a sneer on his face about the scandalous actions the Poles commit against the Germans. If he is not taken into preventive detention, the party comrades will make sure that he will no longer be allowed to run around."

On November 3, 1939, Silberstein was arrested, deported via Rosenheim to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and from there in September 1941 to the Groß-Rosen concentration camp where he was murdered on January 20, 1942.

His brother, Arturo, was also murdered in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1941.

Their sister, Helena, survived and received some restitution in 1966 of some of the properties deposited in Switzerland. It was not until 2003, following proceedings instituted by the Claims Resolution Tribunal, that the remaining assets in Switzerland were returned.

### Odd Display with Bicycle.

A room of the Museum during the display of Odd, showing the bicycle of Marcus Silberstein.





# News from the Museum (cont.)

## Some of the Objects from Odd

(Continued from page 6)

### Postcard

“Hohenems, my hometown,” thus starts the folksong, from which the verse on this postcard is derived. It tells about the Castle Mount and the castle ruins, it sings of the industry in the Schwefel district as well as the agriculture on the banks of the Rhine river, and it reminds of the devastating fires—to the tune of the folksong “Listen, what is entering from outside?” The outside refers to the Jewish population. Thus, Hohenems is described as “promised land” where “the Jew found refuge” and is even called “New Jerusalem.”

What rendered these ambiguous lines so meaningful to the unknown writer of this postcard who signed as “fränzel” is difficult to discern. The addressee was the chambermaid



Amalie Niederkofler who stayed at the “Goldener Stern” in Innsbruck in April 1901. No details about her are extant either; she is not registered in the Innsbruck directory, which suggests that she was only passing through.

### A Display Room at the Museum, Exhibition Odd.

Included in the display room is a window with Hexagram. Just when the Jewish Museum Hohenems was in the making, in 1990, this window was acquired from an antique dealer in Meersburg, and marked as “roof window with Star of David from a destroyed synagogue.” Yet, it remains open whether this is a window with a Star of David that can be linked to a Jewish community. This object could simply be a display of a brewer’s star. Such six-point “Zoigl stars” had been widespread since at least the Middle Ages, mainly in the southern German area and were the guild symbol of the brewers and maltsters. This was long before the 19th century when the Star of David had become the most popular “Jewish” sign. In fact, the hexagram had long been known as a protection symbol against fire; hence, it repeatedly was featured on oven doors.

The idea of decorating the roof window of the Heimann-Rosenthal villa with this colorful window was debated, but rejected in 1990, because its origin was unclear. It was also rejected because it raised the issue of whether a museum should resemble a sacred space. Ultimately, the controversy around this window became the starting point for various literary and scientific examinations regarding the establishment of the Jewish Museum Hohenems.



### Also included in the Odd exhibition and not to be forgotten is the Love and Thief letter

This “Yiddish love letter,” dating from around 1675, could be viewed at the Jewish Museum Hohenems since its first permanent exhibition in 1991. The poetic text on the front side, which alludes to an upcoming wedding, and the recipe of a Jewish wedding cake, was (and still is) on display. Since it features neither a recipient nor a sender, this text might just be a draft.

Then again, from the back side of the note, a completely different story emerges: this is a message to the Prague Jew Israel Samuel, residing in Hohenems since 1671. That note eventually brought about his arrest on January 19, 1675. The hurriedly written Yiddish text contains hints about hidden stolen goods (“schubeh”) and their division. However, this message never reached Israel Samuel. It was caught by the Hohenems authorities.

This letter had been preceded by a burglary into the house of the Hohenems chief district magistrate. Eventually, Israel confessed under torture to his participation in this criminal act and confirmed the names of his accomplices, Salomon Mair and Jakob. Since this note had been included as evidence in the case records, it eventually found its way to the state. In 1988 Karl Heinz Burmeister wrote an essay about this short, double-barreled letter. Nevertheless, he and his successors decided in 1991 and again in 2007 to show just one side of the letter.

## News from the Museum (cont.)

### European Summer University for Jewish Studies, Hohenems July 17–22, 2016 Jewish Homes. Jerusalem and Other Jerusalems

Jerusalem occupies a central place in Jewish tradition, history and indeed fantasy. As the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Judah and the site of the Holy Temple, Jerusalem has inspired Jewish life and culture—and also Christianity and Islam—throughout the ages. This heritage, in fact, is so complex, multifaceted and contested that it is impossible to speak of merely one Jerusalem. Rather, there are many ideas and realities of Jerusalem. And there are even multiple Jerusalems: a heavenly and an earthly one—and one of hell; one in Israel and one in Palestine, one in Lithuania, one in Galicia and several in the United States, there is Fürth, the “Franconian” Jerusalem and Hohenems the “Jerusalem on the *Ems* creek.” The diverse expressions of Jewish creativity and life inspired by “Jerusalem” constitute the focus of this summer school.

The summer university Hohenems, now in its eighth year, is a joint project of the Jewish Museum Hohenems and the universities of Munich, Basel, Vienna, Salzburg, Zurich and Bamberg. It offers a specialized program for students of Jewish studies in the fields of history and culture, literature and linguistics, religious studies and anthropology. Applications have to be sent to the University of Munich. The one-week interdisciplinary program provides students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and to discuss ideas related to a topic of Jewish studies with an international group of scholars and fellow students from various German-speaking countries.

By joining the resources of the participating universities, the students are offered possibilities that go far beyond the scope of the single institute and faculties. The former Jewish Quarter of Hohenems and the Jewish Museum offer an inspiring setting for this. The summer university also encourages collaboration between scholars and the Museum on various levels.

### Festivals, Associations and Other Collaborations in 2016

For the seventh time, the Museum has collaborated with several local cultural initiatives and institutions organizing the regional Festival “Emsiana.” Between May 19 and May 22 2016, exhibitions and music, theater and readings, guided tours through the historic quarters and special programs for children, explored the heritage of the contemporary life of the smallest European metropolis: Hohenems. Highlight of the program was a storytelling concert, with chief cantor Shmuel Barzilai from Vienna, writer Michael Köhlmeier and pianist Paul Gulda, presenting Jewish legends and tales.

Together with the Hohenems Puppet Festival, Homunculus, we celebrated our joint “50th” birthday (as Homunculus also became 25 years old). On June 25th a concert with music by Franz Schubert, Salomon Sulzer and his sons Joseph and Julius will bring together musicians and singers from Israel and Palestine, Austria, the US, and Finland. And in October, we will collaborate with the Organ festival in the Hohenems Parish church.

A special initiative of the Museum in 2016 is bringing various associations, unions and clubs in Hohenems to our exhibitions. Custom made programs are successfully offered to almost all local associations such as the firefighters and the Red Cross, the soccer club and the chess club, the choral societies and choirs, the union of craftsmen and the tourist club, the trade association, the youth center, the churches and the Islamic associations. And they attract local people who never visited the Museum before.

### New Board members in the “Verein”

The “Verein zur Förderung des Jüdischen Museums Hohenems” elected new board members at its general assembly on April 21, 2016, while Jutta Berger was reelected for another three years as president.

After 18 years on the board, Eva Häfele stepped down – and will be serving the Verein as financial auditor. Her crucial role in the transformation of the Museum into its professional form today, cannot be overestimated and we are deeply grateful to her.

Anna Schinnerl and Herbert Pruner also stepped down after many productive years on the board, in order to make place for new enthusiasts among the crowd that is steadily developing.

The Verein now counts more than 580 members, all over the world, many of them contributing to the well being of the Museum as sponsoring members or with special donations.

New members of the board are: Günter Linder, former vice mayor and cultural representative of the city, who will serve as Treasurer, replacing Eva Häfele, Brigitte Plemel (who works for the Vorarlberg tourist agency), Hildegard Schlatter and the young historians Daniel Mosman and Severin Holzknicht.



## News from the Museum (cont.)

### Successful Exhibition on Jewish Pop-Culture and the History of Shellac and Vinyl Is Traveling All Over Europe!



© Photo courtesy of Dietmar Walser

Our exhibition *Jukebox. Jewkbox! A Jewish Century on Shellac and Vinyl*, first exhibited in Hohenems in the fall of 2014, turns out to be our most successful exhibition ever. From March 24 to November 22, 2015, it was shown in the Jewish Museum Munich, and then in the spring 2016 the exhibition traveled to the Museum of Communication in Frankfurt. From July 14 to October 16, the exhibition will be shown in London at the Jewish Museum in Camden. From February through June 2017, the exhibition will be on display in Poland at the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, the largest Jewish Museum in Europe. The last presentation, scheduled to date, will be in Amsterdam's Jewish Historical Museum, starting in the summer of 2017.

This exhibition takes us back to the Jewish 20<sup>th</sup> century. In about 1900, a Jewish immigrant, Emil Berliner, changed the world with the invention of the gramophone and the record. The first medium of a global culture was born. And the Jewish century found its expression on shellac and vinyl and brought into Jewish middle-class homes sacred Jewish music, the reinvention of Jewish folk music, the presentation of Yiddish theatre music on Broadway and the rebels of punk.

The history of shellac and vinyl was also a history of Jewish inventors, musicians, composers, music producers, and songwriters. Their music—the sound of the 20th century—was not always “Jewish” music, but was still a product of Jewish experience. *Jukebox. Jewkbox!* takes one on a journey of discovery through unfamiliar worlds of popular culture, accompanied by personal stories about records that have changed many a life.

The exhibition is accompanied by an English catalog: *Jukebox. Jewkbox! A Jewish Century on Shellac and Vinyl*, English edition | Edited by Hanno Loewy | Bucher Verlag, Hohenems 2014 | 312 pages | € 29,90 | 23,5 x 22 cm | ISBN 978-3-99018-297-0 | 45rpm record included. With essays by Caspar Battegay, Alan Dein, Helene Maimann, Raymond Wolff—and many personal contributions. Feel free to order the catalog from the Museum for 29,90 € plus shipping expenses!).

### Susan Philipsz – Night and Fog Sound Installation in the Jewish Cemetery Hohenems January 30 to April 3, 2016

In collaboration with the Kunsthhaus Bregenz, the Jewish Museum organized a sound installation with the renowned artist Susan Philipsz in the Jewish cemetery of Hohenems, as a part of her Kunsthhaus Bregenz show “Night and Fog.”

Scottish born Susan Philipsz is one of today's leading artists. She has recently increasingly confronted questions of memory, trauma, and mourning, including presentations at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and in Kassel for the Documenta 13. For her new series of works, *War Damaged Musical Instruments*, 2015, she has been employing instruments torn by the violence of war. The point of departure for her project for Kunsthhaus Bregenz and the Jewish Museum of Hohenems was Peter Zumthor's architecture for the Kunsthhaus, an illuminated structure, together with the lake and the fog that is typical of the town. It created a relationship to the Jewish cemetery in Hohenems whose landscape of memory rises from the plain like a sculpture of stairs. Fog as a metaphor was also the source of the title for the 1955 French documentary *Night and Fog* by Alain Resnais, which reconstructed the deportations to Auschwitz and Majdanek. Philipsz deconstructed Hanns Eisler's soundtrack from that documentary into the individual voices of the instruments.



© Photo courtesy of Rudolf Sagmeister

*Save the Date:*  
**Hohenems Descendants Reunion**  
Jewish Museum Hohenems • July 27–30, 2017

# A Jewish Museum in Hohenems — The Concept of the Exhibition and the History of the Project

Kurt Greussing

As the elders of the Commune of Hohenems in 1955 ceremoniously opened their new firehouse, a dedication plaque was placed inside the building with the following text :

*"Fire Department Equipment House u. Infant Welfare / built 1954/55 / ... Mayor H. Amann".*

The mayor's statement, set forth on this plaque, had been based on clear misinformation. In fact, the building had been erected in the years 1770-1772. But the conversion to a fire station had erased the historic nature of this baroque building, just as the dedication plaque had erased memories of its function until 1938, that is, as a synagogue of the Jewish community of Hohenems.



This destruction of history took place at a time and in a climate when the last Jewish "displaced persons" – refugees and concentration camp survivors from Eastern Europe – had left their not low-conflict stopover in Hohenems to emigrate to Israel or the United States. Thus it seemed that a local chapter of local history finally had been closed. and the handling of the former synagogue documented that the custodians of Jewish property in Hohenems, the Jewish Community of Vienna and Innsbruck, had no interest in further use of a religious building, that had become meaningless for its original function. With no Jews living in Hohenems anymore, the former synagogue, which had been "aryanised" by the Nazi regime to be used as a communal property, had been restituted by the Commune of Hohenems after a laborious process, to the Jewish Community of Innsbruck. It was now sold to the Commune of Hohenems and contractually established that in the future the building should be used for a dignified purpose, which seemed compatible with the character of a former religious building – in this case, well, as a fire station and certainly not a cinema or a pub. And on the part of Hohenems – as well as the rest of Vorarlberg – there apparently was no interest in the history of this building, not in the monument itself, or in

the memory of its lost function, not even with some regret or maybe sadness over this loss, at least so as to be expressed through a correct plaque. (Since April 11 1991, the date of the opening of the Jewish Museum, a plaque pertinent to the true history of the building had been placed on the former synagogue's outside wall.)

Even when naming the main stretch of road in the former Jewish quarter after the Second World War, those names that had been eliminated by the Nazi local government because they recalled former Jewish residents, were not reinstated. The Commune of Hohenems rather opted for the neutral-sounding name "Schweizer Straße."

In addition to this "official" forgetfulness of history in the postwar period and until the last few decades, there was another "popular" public that did not repress the Jewish past, but also did not fully remember it. There was, in local discourse at least, the "Jewish quarter," the "Jewish school," the "Jewish houses" – memories retained in everyday knowledge of the population, but which no one wanted to explore further. In this semi-darkness of collective memory, secret awareness and stories thrived about Jewish Hohenems, rich Jewish ladies and their Christian maids, about the disappearance, gone unnoticed, of the last old Jewish Hohenems men and women under the Nazis, about border crossings of Jews to nearby Switzerland with the aid of storm troopers – Hohenemsers who wore Nazi uniforms, but good-hearted and feeling as just Christians, and about those strange Jews that were quartered in Hohenems after the war, who (it was thought) acted with cheeky demeanor, tricks and ruthless profiteering – in such stark and telling contrast to the behavior of "our Jews," now gone.

And above all there was the Jewish cemetery: a strange lonely graveyard outside the town, vaguely visible from the passing train over there at the slope of the mountains – out of bounds unless one knew or wanted to know how to find the access road and to obtain the key to the always-locked gate.

(Continued on page 11)



© Photo courtesy of Michael Guggenheimer



## A Jewish Museum in Hohenems

### The History of the Project

*(Continued from page 10)*

#### Memorial or Museum?

Only slowly was this story brought into consciousness, at least of those who were interested in history. A great deal was done tirelessly over many years, by the director of the Vorarlberg Provincial Archives, Dr. Karl Heinz Burmeister (now deceased). Most significant was the second reprint of the work first published in 1905 by the Hohenems Rabbi Dr. Aron Tänzer about “The History of the Jews in Hohenems and in the Rest of Vorarlberg” (Bregenz 1982), with two appendices, one by Dr. Karl Heinz Burmeister about the Jews in Vorarlberg in the Middle Ages and another by the Hohenems historian Dr. Norbert Peter about the anti-Semitic actions directed against the Jewish community of Hohenems since the 1880s. This reprint and its appendices made the topic available to a wider professional public.

In 1986, the Hohenems Palace Archives, with its numerous sources on the history of the Jewish community of the town, were given to the Vorarlberg Provincial Archives. Then, in 1988, the book “Documents on the History of Jews in Vorarlberg from 17th to 19th Century,” edited by Dr. Karl Heinz Burmeister and Dr. Alois Niederstätter was published. The year before an exhibition had been organized by the Provincial Archives in the city of Bregenz on the life and work of Rabbi Dr. Aron Tänzer who lived and worked in Hohenems from 1896 to 1905. In 1988, a collective volume on “Anti-Semitism in Vorarlberg – A Regional Study on The History of a Weltanschauung,” Edited By Dr. Werner Dreier, was also released, and included individual contributions relating to anti-Jewish prejudice in what is now Vorarlberg from the 14th century to the early years after WW II. This volume also provided, in particular, extensive analyses, well researched and well written, of the history of Jewish

Vorarlberg from the second half of the 19th to the 20th century.

In retrospect, the Tänzer exhibition and the Anti-Semitism anthology were decisive impetuses for the planning of a Jewish museum. First, it had been demonstrated that material worthy of an exhibition was still available and the creation of a museum no longer had to start from scratch. It also became clear that the once awakened and now sustained interest in Jewish regional history was generating interest in an even larger circle, so that at least a core team of knowledgeable experts would be available to develop a museum.

Suggestions for an institution that should in some way serve the memory of the obliterated Hohenems Jewish community had been put forth periodically since the 1970s. But that had not led to concrete planning. With the establishment of the Association of the Jewish Museum Hohenems in the fall of 1986, however, it was becoming evident that an organization was ready for such an institution, even though the housing of the Museum was still an unresolved question.

This had to do with the issue of space to be made available for such a purpose. In 1983, the city of Hohenems had purchased the Heimann-Rosenthal Villa, then a representative, though sadly decrepit neo-classical art nouveau building; in 1987, under the responsibility of architect Roland Gnaiger, restoration was started. But at that time it was thought that the former salon upstairs in the Villa should serve as the Wedding Room of the Civil Registry, and an Alpmuseum should be in the basement. The Jewish Museum in this plan would have consisted of just two memorial rooms – one for the cantor and composer Salomon Sulzer and one for the manufacturing family Rosenthal.

This idea of a commemorative space was probably inspired by the intention to bring out the so-called “good” aspects

of the Hohenems Jewish community – art and industriousness, spirituality and upper-class charity. That, however, would have been little more than an attempt to turn the negative image of the Jews, generated by anti-Semitic prejudice, to its opposite, a positive one. But this would have failed to deliver a fair presentation of the history of the Hohenems Jewish community as a whole. This community had produced great personalities of cultural and economic life in the 19th century. But what would have been the case, if this community – like many others in the South German cultural area – had been less favored historically, politically and geographically, and thus remained largely poor? To whom would a memorial room then have been dedicated? And could a few prominent members really be representative of the history of the entire Jewish community – certainly not the “ordinary people” against whom from the 1890s onwards were directed an increasingly aggressive anti-Semitism and finally the expulsion and extermination policy of the Nazis

In the middle of 1990, with a strict deadline for the opening of the Museum in April 1991, the final design of the project was begun. For this purpose a joint effort was required – especially financial – of the city of Hohenems led by Mayor Dipl. Otto Amann, who was also president of the Museum Association, and the cultural department of the Vorarlberg State Government under state minister Dr. Guntram Lins. With the academic supervision of Dr. Karl Heinz Burmeister and the project coordination by Dr. Kurt Greussing, who created a detailed work plan for the Museum, work progressed. Now material was systematically collected and processed for presentation by a core team (Dr. Sabine Fuchs, Sabine Folie, later Dr. Bernhard Purin, and in the final stage Dr. Eva Grabherr, as the designated director taking over the project coordination) and by more than 20 expert freelancers for research and organization.

The short one-year period for planning and implementing the project

*(Continued on page 12)*

## A Jewish Museum in Hohenems

### The History of the Project

(Continued from page 11)

necessitated investigation and collection activities, including substantive detail design and museographic design, to be developed in parallel. The office in charge of the design, Vienna architect Elsa Prochazka, also took on and resolved content tasks that went far beyond mere interior design.

#### Elements of the design

During the preparation and implementation of the project some essential conceptual elements emerged.

*No isolated approach to the history of the Jewish community*

First, the Museum should not be primarily a “religious museum” nor should it be a site for the general history of Judaism. Also to be avoided was a narrowing down into other detailed aspects, such as Jewish industrialists and Jewish bourgeoisie in 19th century Hohenems. Rather, it should, as Dr. Karl Heinz Burmeister had proposed earlier, “present the local and regional conditions.” This also meant documenting the political and cultural conflicts, with which the Jewish community was confronted, among them not least local and regional anti-Semitism of the 19th and 20th centuries.

In this context, what should further be avoided was to present the fate of the Jewish community as determined only by others, to have them appear as an object of (often hostile) disposition through the Christian majority society. Conversely, also to be avoided was a mere internal perspective, prioritizing the view on religious practice, that would have hidden the behavior of the non-Jewish environment vis-a-vis the minority.

Thus the concept of the Museum took its start from the central motif of the interaction of the Jewish minority

with the non-Jewish majority. The possibilities of this interaction ranged from demarcation and exclusion (in the form of physical violence and persecution) to neighborly proximity and political cooperation. The Hohenemser history illustrates this spectrum – particularly evident in the 19th century with the reformist currents within the Jewish community and the unfolding Jewish-Christian cooperation in the liberal milieu of the whole community, against which, at the same time, an increasingly aggressive Catholic-conservative or christian-social anti-Semitism began to evolve.

*Destruction and musealization – considering the relationship*

Secondly, it was clear that the design of the house in some way always had to refer to the fact that the National Socialist persecution and extermination policy, not just through their local agents, set a traumatic end point in the history of Jewish life in Vorarlberg. Without the bureaucratically organized mass murder by the Nazi state, there would have been no need for a Jewish Museum in Hohenems – the history of the local Jewish community could have been considered like that of any other religious or immigrant minority, likely to have become a historical incident and not of general public interest.

As a result of such deliberations it became clear that for the Museum “Judaica,” that is items from the cultural, especially religious life of Jews worthy of presentation, should be considered as part and parcel of the recent history of repression and expulsion of Jewish life and culture. That such items have now become museum exhibits and were traded as such on the international art market, arose from the extinction of Jewish culture by the Nazis and a repeatedly unleashed anti-Semitism after World War II, especially in Eastern Europe.

Only by unmistakably making reference to these conditions, a credible integration of such objects in the

Museum would have been feasible. For these Judaica necessarily always carry the marks of that particular history, through which they were uprooted from their original environment and were made objects in a museum. That such a collection, therefore, would always “reflect the destruction that made the individual object be a collector’s item” (as put in the Berlin Museum’s Judaica Catalog of 1989), had to apply to the Hohenems project as well.

But here a special presentation problem came to light: From the cultural and religious life of the Hohenems Jews, after the destruction of what had already become a very small community in 1939-40, almost no objects remained, and also hopes were not fulfilled that lost objects would, in the course of founding the Museum, again “surface,” that is, be handed over or at least offered for sale. Only pictures, books and some small items, such as one or the other mezuzah could be collected or uncovered by research in archives and private collections.

Could systematic purchases of Judaica solve the problem of how to represent Jewish religious and cultural life of a community whose very traces had been eradicated systematically? Would it have been justifiable for the Museum to show something via such proxy objects, when the real objects could not be shown any more? Would it not support the impression that “Judaism” was the same everywhere, as evidenced by the ritual objects, from an eastern European metropolis to a liberal rural Jewish community in the Bodensee area and to a middle-class urban Jewish community in Great Britain?

In the end the use of such items was declined in Hohenems, not least because a textual preparation of the item’s history simply would have overburdened the Museum as a medium (or the visitors’ desire to read). So, for example, a 1900 wedding canopy from Bucharest (with embroidered dedication in Hebrew and Romanian), bought on the international art market, would have required at least

(Continued on page 13)



## A Jewish Museum in Hohenems

### The History of the Project

(Continued from page 12)

three text levels of information:

- the function of the object in the context of religious ritual;
- differences of ritual and its meaning (including the Jewish tradition) in the original socio-cultural environment on the one hand and in the liberal milieu of Judaism in Hohenems on the other;
- explanations of how the object had come on the art market and found its way to its present location in the Museum.

Since a highly problematic Judaica market is being promoted through the purchase of such items, and the provenance appear often quite speculative, sloppy or flat wrong even when sold by major auction houses, public institutions should be motivated at least to exercise extreme restraint in this field.

#### *Critical handling of local history*

Third to be considered was the intellectual sponsorship of the Museum. Non-Jews wanted to create a Museum about Jews predominantly for non-Jews. That meant dealing openly and relentlessly with the history of the non-Jewish majority in their relations with their Jewish neighbors. Local conflicts (and the local share of Judeophobia and anti-Semitism) should not be blanked out in order not to serve the customary need for harmony in much of local history research and thus creating a subsequent apology for local propagandists of anti-Semitism.

Such a conflict-adjusted local history perspective on the more recent Jewish history of Hohenems, based not on verifiable historical sources, but rather on alleged oral history bridging two or three generations, had been a subject of historical discourse in Hohenems and

in Vorarlberg as a whole, at the time of the founding of the Museum. Not by coincidence, on the question of function and weight of anti-Semitism in the relationship between Christians and Jews – specifically in Hohenems – a conflict broke out between the project team and some leaders of the Museum Association, just a few weeks before the opening of the Museum on April 10, 1991.

#### *Relation to other Jewish museums*

Fourth, without overrating the resources and the exhibits available, the Museum should be on par as to its contents and design with comparable institutions. At the same time, the differences with Jewish museums such as Basel, Frankfurt or Berlin should become clear: Hohenems was not a place with a reestablished Jewish community whose cultural history and religious heritage – and, consequently, its further life and expectations – was to be documented. Also the idea of Christian guilt and reconciliation with Judaism through an attempt to make Judaism more visible in Christianity, as has emerged from recent trends in Protestant as well as Catholic theology, was not a concept or a paradigm for the Museum, although it often played a role in the establishment of memorials and museums elsewhere (for example in Dorsten, Westphalia). Instead, the idea was of a Museum as a place that in the history of a minority also would critically clarify the history of the majority, thus telling us our very “own” history unadorned.

#### *Museum as a social site*

From there it followed, as the fifth element of the concept, that a museum to be effective, had to be more than a house with a reasonably sensible arrangement of exhibits. For its visitors a museum always generates its own “imaginary world” that can never unquestionably be planned by the Museum creators. For it’s the visitors themselves who create a “text” out of images, objects, words, enactments, spatial impressions, and routes. Museums, therefore, never provide

definite wisdom and knowhow, but merely offerings of information packages to choose from. It is not the museum, but the effort and/or the desire of the individual visitor that ultimately is making the – unpredictable – result of all planning efforts.

But a museum can offer, beyond its exhibits, means that facilitate the visitors’ effort of creating their own “text,” by inspiring and gently guiding them: through educational programs for students and adults, through lectures and events, by offering a reading cafeteria and a library, through exhibitions and publications, in short, by a sum of activities that make the museum, besides a place of watching, learning and marveling, a public place of speech and action.

That, however, must be provided by those who manage and operate the museum. Because only by speaking about the dead things being presented in the museum – and therewith about the dead to whom these things once belonged or about whom they report – will they all regain significance and meaning.



Kurt Greussing, PhD., was born in 1946 in Lauterach/Vorarlberg. He studied Political Sciences and Iranian Studies at the Free University of Berlin (West). In 1989, Kurt Greussing was commissioned to develop a museum concept for the Heimann-Rosenthal Villa. From 1993 to 2003, he was active in projects in the field of development aid in Southern Africa. Since 2004, he has been working on social development in Vorarlberg and issues related to contemporary Islam in Europe.

A first version of this text was published (in German) in: Eva Grabherr (ed.), “A very small Jewish community with only memories left to keep it alive!”, Jews in Hohenems, Catalog of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Hohenems 1996.

# Felice Jaffé-Brunner (1924-2012)—Hohenems: A Duality

LUISA JAFFÉ-BRUNNER <sup>1</sup>

[Editor's Note]: A number of individuals were instrumental in the formation of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. Amongst the descendants, Felice Jaffé-Brunner was the leading force. How did Felice Jaffé-Brunner become so involved with the Museum? His daughter tells.)

While we were living in Geneva, Hohenems was not too far away for us. I went to Hohenems for the first time when I was about 13 just like my brother, Philip, first visited at around the same age a few years earlier.

Our father made it a point to show us from where our ancestors came, where the Brunner house was and of course, we also went to the cemetery. Sadly, we never found the grave of his great-great-grand-father since it was in such a pitiable state at the time; nevertheless we laid a stone at random on one of the graves.

Only after my father passed away did I realize that he probably meant this to be an initial journey to connect us to our Jewish origins at about the age when we should have done our Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Since our mother was Christian, we grew up with both religions, but neither of our parents was a practicing Jew or Christian. My father was a so-called Yom Kippur Jew.

Felice himself had grown up in a very liberal family. They celebrated some Jewish holidays; he did his Bar Mitzvah in Trieste with a Rabbi who later converted to Christianity. My father could hardly read Hebrew and needed to learn the text he was supposed to read by heart. He remembers that his parents celebrated Pessach when he was a child, yet they also celebrated Christmas.

Felice had lost his German paternal grandparents before World War II and grew up in the K&K (Kaiserlich und Königlich—imperial and royal ) atmosphere of Trieste until the family crossed the border into Switzerland. Before Mussolini's racial laws were enforced in Trieste, the family would always gather at his maternal grandparents, Fanny and Filippo Brunner, on Sundays and all other important occasions. He told me many times how fond he was of them. Felice



had developed a close relationship with his grandfather who must have told him about the family history and origins about which he would later become so knowledgeable.

Over the years, Felice brought us to other places where ancestors were buried. He was keen on genealogy and had stories to tell about numerous living, as well as deceased family members. He would have probably never gone back to Hohenems, had he not heard about the Museum project. I don't know how he found out, but from then on he developed a passion for the city, its people and the life of the Museum.

Before it even opened, I know he accompanied Eva Grabherr and other people involved in planning the Museum when they went to buy objects for the permanent collection at an auction. We traveled to Hohenems in 1991 for the opening of the Museum and met a handful of other Brunner relatives as well as the Bollag family, of course. Felice continued to visit Hohenems on a regular basis and always paid a visit to Otto Amman, the mayor who had initiated the Museum project. Over the years, he got to know quite a few of the residents of Hohenems.

From the time of the opening of the Museum, Felice invested his free time to search for new Brunner descendants, as well as those of other families. I found stacks of letters and faxes he had sent to descendants scattered around the world; hopefully they are all recorded in the Museum database by now. His goal was to have 1000 descendants on record; by now the figure

has doubled. In any case, early on, not only did descendants need to be identified, they also needed to be persuaded to travel to Hohenems to visit the Museum. Before Eva Grabherr, the first director, left the museum five years after its opening, Felice already envisioned the descendants' meeting that finally took place in 1998.

Eva recounts in *Hohenems Re-visited* that when my father first brought up the idea of the gathering, she answered with her customary calm composure "eine tolle Idee," "a great idea."

Museum directors changed, he got along with some better than with others. My brother and I were always surprised to hear how much admiration he had for Eva and Hanno, but also Eva Haeffele, Kurt Gruessing and the enthusiastic descendants, Stefan Rollin, Sue Shimer, Kurt Bollag, Dorothy Winter, etc.

He was at times a difficult person, obsessive some might say in a polite way. My brother and I were used to hear him criticize people, yet for the people of the Museum and the descendants who left a mark in Hohenems, he never did. Towards the end of his life, he did tell me that he had finally found Hanno's shortcomings: "he talks a lot and he has too many ideas, but they are always good, his creativity is endless."

For the last decades of his life, he lived with two emotions. On the one hand, he was proud of his undertakings in Hohenems and felt nurtured by the friendships he developed with descendants and Hohenems citizens; on the other hand, he knew that his own parents would have disapproved of his path. After the war, they never set foot back in either Austria or Germany the countries they had to flee.

Felice only wanted to re-assemble people whose forefathers had to choose exile for economic or discriminatory reasons. In a freer world, all roads lead us back to Hohenems.

<sup>1</sup> Among other things in her busy life, Luisa Jaffé-Brunner has chaired the Descendants Reunion Committees in 2008 and again for the 2017 Reunion



## Stephan Rollin (1925- 2004)

CLAUDE ROLLIN<sup>1</sup>

My father, Stephan Rollin, was born in Vienna, Austria in 1925. In 1938, when he was 13 years old, he was sent to school in Italy together with his 11-year-old sister, Helene ("Nini"), in order to escape the Nazis. About two months later, the director of the Italian boarding school declared bankruptcy and closed it down, literally leaving the children on the street. A kindly teacher took care of my father and his sister, Nini, for several months and was finally able to smuggle them across the border into Switzerland where a distant relative put them into schools. After completing high school, my father went on to receive a Master's level degree in Chemistry from the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich.



In 1951, he immigrated to the United States. He married my mother, Renée Rollin (nee Straus) in 1959. In 1963, my Dad and his two partners founded EMC Technology, a very successful electronics manufacturing company. The company grew to over 200 employees, was awarded dozens of patents, and became a premier supplier of technical electronic components.

Amidst all of his success, my father never forgot his Austrian roots. He was the son of Paul Rosenthal, who was born in 1891 in Hohenems, and the grandson of Arnold and Ottilie Rosenthal, who lived in the house that now serves as the Jewish Museum in Hohenems. While my grandfather, Paul (who eventually changed the family name to Rollin), was Jewish, my grandmother, Frederike Trampler, was not and therefore, technically, my father was not considered Jewish. Nevertheless, he had an extraordinary childhood, evading the Nazis (who weren't concerned about such technicalities), and bouncing among Austria, Switzerland, and Italy. He was drafted into the military three times and each time he managed to ignore the calls.

While on a ski trip to Austria in the early 1990s, my father learned that the Heimann-Rosenthal Villa, which had served as the Rosenthal family's ancestral home, had been converted into the Jewish Museum in Hohenems. Intrigued, he made it a point to visit the Museum several times in its early years. Those visits spurred a lifelong passion for my father's involvement in the development of the Museum and he eagerly supported many Museum projects over the years.

In the late 1990s, my father enthusiastically supported the idea that the Museum and the town of Hohenems itself could organize a reunion of descendants of the former Jewish community in Hohenems. He encouraged my sister Nadia and I to travel to Hohenems with our children and participate in the

first reunion. That reunion, which was held in August, 1998, attracted about 170 descendants from around the world.

After the successful 1998 reunion, my father sought to further help the Museum by establishing a tax-exempt charitable organization in the United States to support the Museum financially. He also worked on recruiting a Board of Trustees to run what was ultimately called the "American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems."

To rally support for his idea, my father sent a letter, dated November 20, 1998, asking Americans who had attended the 1998 Descendants' reunion whether they would be willing to support the establishment of a U.S. based tax-exempt organization to help the Museum. In that letter, my father explained that the Museum was being supported largely by Austrian government agencies and, from year-to-year, it had become more difficult to get the necessary funding to maintain the Museum. He asked, "Don't you think the time has come for us, the descendants, to assume some of the burden?"

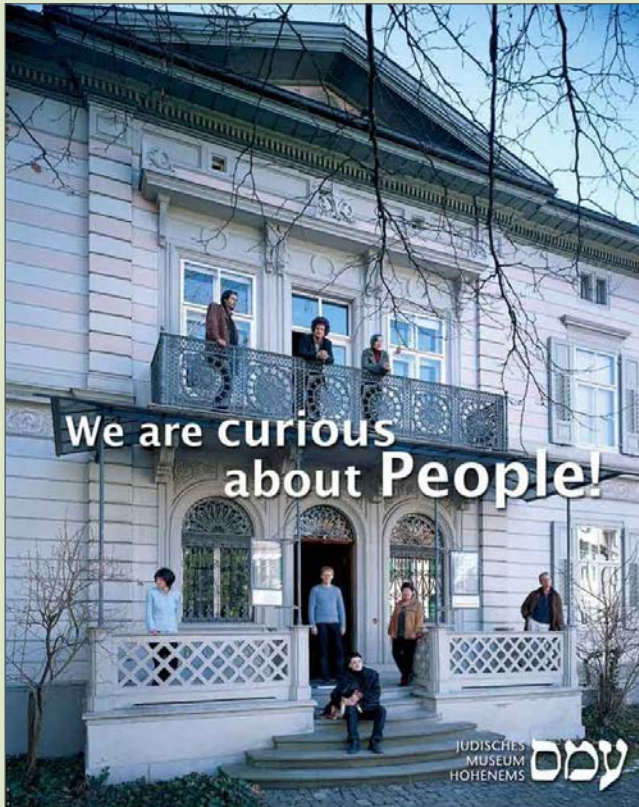
In response to my father's letter, dozens of descendants wrote in support of the creation of the American Friends and Uri Taenzer volunteered to do all of the legal work necessary to create a U.S.-based tax-exempt organization. IRS approval was granted in a reasonably short period of time and the American Friends organization was born. My father was proud of the fact that he was one of the founders, and the first President, of the American Friends.

On April 29, 2001, my father, along with Kurt Bollag and Felix Jaffe, were made honorary members of the Museum Board. As stated on the Museum's website, my father's "enthusiasm and willingness to give his all for the Museum was evident to those who knew him."

The American Friends have supported a variety of Museum projects over the years, including a major undertaking to redo the Museum's permanent exhibition about 10 years ago. Its members have been kept well informed about all of the Museum's activities, and have learned a great deal about the history of the former Jewish inhabitants of Hohenems through articles in the association's newsletter, *In Touch*. The Honorable Sue Shimer, an original American Friends Trustee, has graciously served as the editor of the newsletter and is primarily responsible for keeping all of the descendants so well informed over these many years.

Sadly, my father passed away on May 12, 2004. I think that he would have been especially pleased to see that the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems is still going strong and that the next reunion for decedents will take place in July, 2017. Although he won't be there in person, he will definitely be there in spirit. Through the Jewish Museum's exhibits, newsletters, and events, I feel that my father's legacy continues to live on today.

<sup>1</sup> Claude Rollin served as President of the American Friends Jewish Museum Hohenems for several years and is now Vice President of the American Friends. Stephan Rollin's wife, Renee Rollin, and Stephan Rollin's daughter Nadia Follman assisted in the preparation of this article.



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.

עמם

## 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.

## Hohenems Reunion, July 27 – 30, 2017

The preparation of the next grand reunion, celebrating 400 years of Jewish presence in Hohenems and the Hohenems Diaspora is under way. The descendants committee, which is still growing, has informed everyone we could reach about the date and described some preliminary ideas for the program. Naturally at this early stage, many things still have to be settled. Right now it is particularly important to get the date into all calendars—and to help us to inform those who still are not

on our mailing list. So please help US know about all of your relatives about whom YOU know!

Jessica Piper (Rosenthal) will be with us for two months this summer as an intern. Together we will publish a blog about her experiences in Hohenems—and I hope she will be followed by all of you—and present a vivid impression of the exciting everyday life of the Museum.