



The former Jewish Community of Sien
a township in the German State of Rhineland-Palatinate

by Ruth and Ulrich Eckhoff

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a township in the German State of Rhineland-Palatinate.

Our long-held goal of researching the Jewish past of our town was given added impetus by our coming upon an inscription at the Jewish Cemetery in nearby Odenbach reading, “*Mortui viventes obligant*”- -Latin for “*The living have an obligation to the dead*”.

It made a deep impression and brought home that these obligations include what the French, in this context, are wont to call “*le devoir de mémoire*”.

We owe it to our former fellow-citizens of the Jewish faith to remember their odyssey and to not forget that they once were a part of our township, lived their own beliefs and went about their everyday lives as an integral part of the town.

In fact, we owe much more to those without any tombstone anywhere, having been forcibly removed to far-off places and slaughtered by the National-Socialists, commonly called “Nazis”.

This “*devoir de mémoire*”---this *duty of memory*--- also obligates us to forever remember that which our fathers and grandfathers have wrought and to do all in our power in order that a Holocaust and an Auschwitz not ever recur, given that we---the sons, the daughters, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren of the perpetrators---may not feel that we bear any responsibility ourselves.

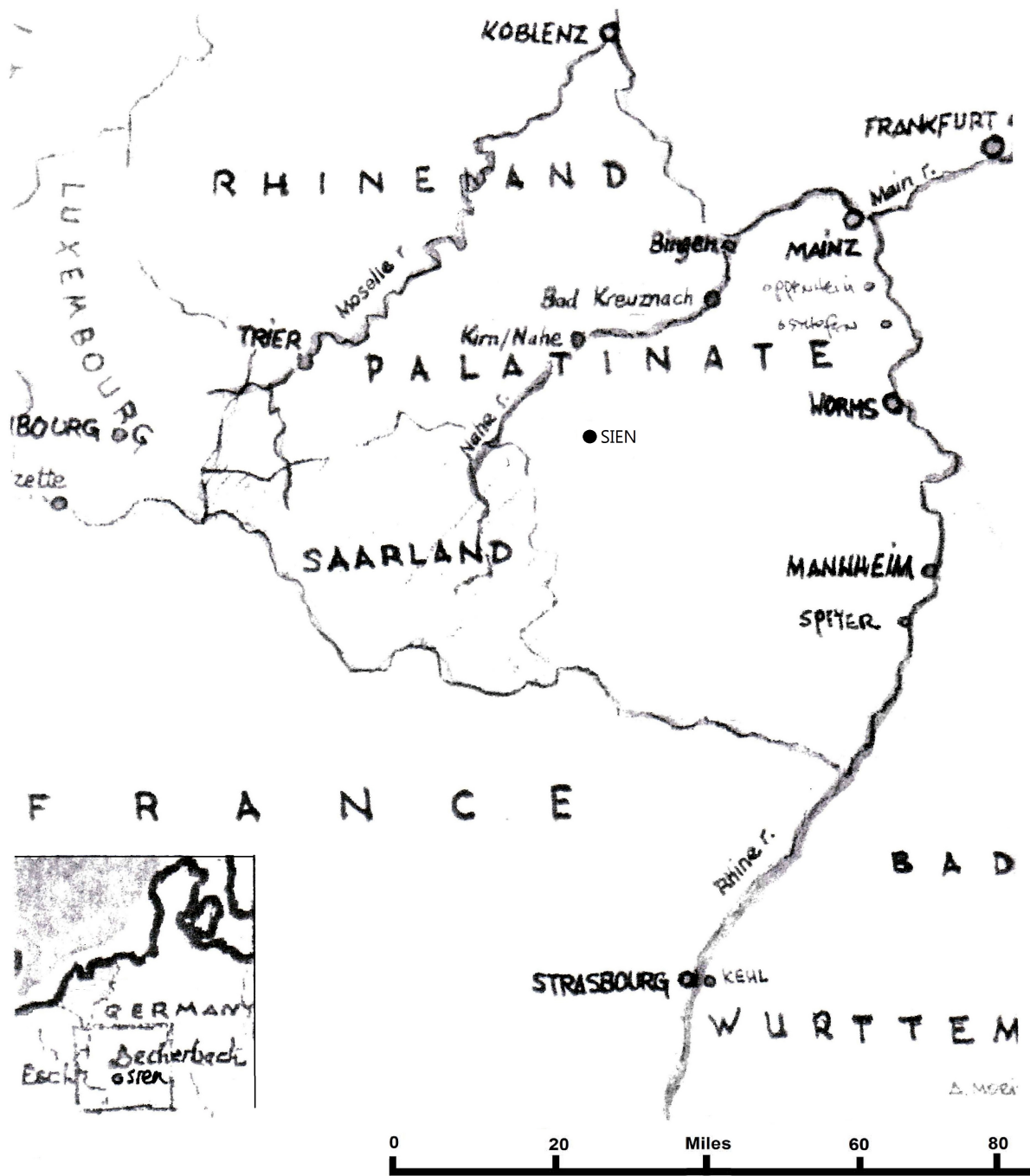
Thus, we have gone about collecting documentation from various archives, studying those gravestones with still legible inscriptions, seeking memories still extant in town, interviewing witnesses and, last but not least, trying to find surviving descendants of the victims in order to have them participate in this undertaking.

On November 9, 1998, the 60th anniversary of the Pogrom known in infamy as the “*Night of Broken Glass*”, we presented the results of our undertaking to the inhabitants of Sien.

The following pages are excerpted from subject presentation.

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The Rhineland-Palatinate State of Germany.

SIEN AND ITS REGION.

With its 600 souls, the village of Sien lies within a triangle bounded by the rivers Rhine and Nahe and, to the South, by the former border with France. The immediate vicinity of Sien is some ten miles equidistant from the towns of Kirn, of Idar-Oberstein and of Meisenheim in the German State of Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz).

Administratively, the township of Sien belongs to Birkenfeld County (*Kreis*); it is located in the South-West of that district, at the juncture of the area between the towns of Birkenfeld, Bad Kreuznach and Kusel.

In the last century, *Sien* has been relegated to second-class status due to the building of the Nahe and Glan Valley Rail links, to changes in the nature of agriculture and, most importantly, to the creation of the nearby "Baumholder" Army Base; this latter event results in about 4000 people being relocated from the area and, thus, Sien being forced to give up part of its territory. As a consequence, Sien loses some of its former importance—both economical and political.

Documents from the Early Middle Ages mention Sien as being the seat of a High Court of Justice for the Upper *Nahegau* (Nahe County). A number of nearby villages are then tithing to the Lords of Sien at their castle in a part of town called *Sienerhöhe*.

The marriage of the last Sien heiress, Schonetta, with *Reinhard von Sickingen* results in about half of Sien reverting to the Von Sickingens. One of Schonetta's grandsons, heir to the Sien domain, is the famous *Franz von Sickingen*, ardent defender of the Lutheran faith who gives asylum to persecuted followers of Luther at Ehrenburg castle near Kreuznach.

In 1785, the Counts of Salm ("*Wild- and Rheingrafen zu Salm*") purchase the Sickingen estates of Sien. Under their best-known representative, Johann XI Dominick Albert, Sien becomes an administrative county seat.

French from 1798 to 1814, Sien is a "*mairie*", a French administrative center.

The ensuing 1816 to 1834 Saxe-Coburg over-lordship sees Sien again being an administrative center. Even in its so-called "Golden Age", during the Prussian era which follows, Sien remains, for the next 75 years, until 1909, the seat of the administration.

Thereafter, Sien plays but a very minor role in regional affairs.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF SIEN.

No history of the town would be complete without mention of the Jewish Community. As thoroughly as historians may have researched the history of the town, they have---for whatever reasons---given nary a thought to its Jewish component-- their chronicles generally containing no more than an occasional superficial afterthought.

It is thus no wonder that the younger generations are scarcely aware of the existence of a Jewish Community, as nothing in the town recalls that people of the Jewish faith once lived here.

“Flurweg” (formerly “*Jurregasse*” –Jewstreet, in the local dialect), near the center of the village is where a number of our Jewish compatriots had once made their homes. These former abodes now have new owners and have been remodeled, so that hardly a reminder of their former appearance remains.

Nothing is left of the original aspect of the synagogue, the prayer and meeting place of that community, as it has also been remodeled by its new owners.

The cemetery is one of the few reminders of a Jewish past in Sien. Well away from the town center, hidden at the edge of woods, its stones recall a lively Jewish presence. . . . for those with the courage to fight their way through dense overgrowth in order to reach this remote place.

Deciphering the messages on these witnesses of times gone by is difficult due to the withering of the inscriptions on the soft sandstone.

The end of the Community of Sien now goes back almost two generations---- few people having any recollection of their Jewish neighbors and of their tragic demise at the time of the Nazis

Soon, even these witnesses to times past will be no more.

The oldest written evidence of a permanent Jewish presence in Sien dates to the time when Sien belonged half to the Counts of Salm-Kyrburg, and half to the Sickingens.

While the half of Sien owned by the von Sickingens shows no evidence of their being any Jews in their part of the township, a Salm-Kyrburg document dated March 28, 1760, "*A registry of Jews living in the town of Syen under the protection of the Count of Salm-Kyburg*" lists five family heads, as follows:

1. Jud Mentle Wittib
2. Jud Sabel
3. Jud Mausche Wittib
4. Jud Anchels Wittib
5. Jud Pohl.

("Wittib" means "widow" or "dowager"
: "Jud" means "Jew" or "Jewess" to a Christian, the same as "Goye" (i.e. "Pagan") means "Christian" or "Gentile" to a Jew—all derogatory terms).
: Jews do generally not have permanent family names in these parts before 1808)

In 1760, there are thus five heads of households, hence five Jewish families, in Sien. They do not enjoy the same rights as the other inhabitants of the town and are forced to pay dearly for a so-called "*Schutzbrief*", (= "letter of protection"), a coerced Jew-tax, tolerating their residence but, in actual fact, entitling them to not one ounce of protection.

As second-class tolerated residents, they are forbidden to exercise any kind of profession or to acquire any land, so that farming is closed to them. They live of petty trading, cattle and horse-trading and money lending.

Things change for the better as of 1798 when Sien becomes French and all its inhabitants—without exception—are now French citizens. Nobles are chased off and feudal obligations abolished.

Jews, as newly-minted French citizens, see all professions now open to them.

By 1808, there are 42 Jews in Sien.

After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, Sien is part of the Saxe-Coburg *Duchy of Lichtenberg* and, by 1828, the Jewish population has increased to fifty one souls.

The newly-installed feudal masters, ruling with an iron hand, force Jews to submit character references when applying for a trader's permit. This so-called "*décret infâme*" (infamous legislation) was in fact originally introduced by Napoleon in 1808.

The following apply for such a permit in the 1833/1834 period:

Isaak Rothschild, butcher
Leopold Rothschild, cattle dealer
Jakob Rothschild I, cattle dealer
Jakob Rothschild II cattle dealer
Daniel Rothschild, cattle dealer
Jakob Stern cattle dealer
Anselm Schlachter, butcher
Jakob Kaufmann, retailer

All applications are approved and each may thus pursue his calling.

The village, now annexed to Prussia as 1834, so remains until the end of WW II.

Prussia does not give full rights to the Jews of Sien as citizenship, the so-called "*Indigenat*", is being predicated on their proving long-time residency in these parts, having a permanent family name and being able to write German in the then-usual German Gothic-style script-- and not in the simplified Hebrew "Rashi" script they had used heretofore to set down phonetic German.

A total of 66 Sien Jews qualify for Prussian citizenship.

The Jewish population reaches its highest point in 1852 with a total of 72 souls, at a time when the total population of Sien is 530 ---thus representing about 13% of the total population.

Just as the Jewish population increases at the start of 19th Century, so it diminishes in the second half so that, by 1895, only 36 Jews remain in Sien and, by 1925, only ten. Emigration is driven by economic and political considerations as the village is too small to support this number of souls; the creation of the German Empire in 1871 gives them, for the first time, truly full citizenship rights and freedom to relocate and seek opportunities elsewhere.

THE ROTHSCHILD AND SCHLACHTER FAMILIES.

The history of the Jewish Community in Sien is, above all, the history of the local Rothschild and Schlachter families as, being the leading Jewish families in Sien, they are tantamount to dynasties.

Other Jewish families in Sien, be they named Kaufmann, Stern, Stricker or Herz are invariably the families of daughters of those two clans.

The founding ancestor of the Sien "*Rothschild Dynasty*" is Joseph Loeb, born in 1732 in nearby Schweinschied who, with wife Rahel, born in nearby Bärweiler, settles in Sien in the year 1760.

In line with the Napoleonic decree of July 20, 1808 imposing permanent names on all, he adopts the permanent name Joseph Rothschild. -

Joseph Loeb יוסף לוי

Eliser Joseph יוסף יליזר

Loeb Joseph יוסף לוי לוי

Coppel Joseph יוסף קופל

x *Signatures pre 1808 of (future)Rothschild's in Rashi Hebrew script*
Joseph Loeb aka Joseph Rothschild: son, Eliser Joseph aka Matthias Rothschild
son Loeb Joseph, aka Leopold Rothschild: son Coppel Joseph aka Jakob Rothschild II

Even his married sons and a son-in-law opt for the name Rothschild. Until that time, they had used a patronymic, personal name together with their father's name, so that the second name changed with each generation.

We don't know what compels Joseph Loeb and his sons to pick that very name of Rothschild. Maybe they are fascinated with a name made world-famous by the Frankfurt bankers, a name meaning success, the highest of ethical behavior and a reputation for good deeds--though there are of course no family ties of any kind.

Joseph Rothschild's many descendants—three sons, three daughters and about 40 grandchildren—are all over Sien. To differentiate them, people use their first name as a family name, in the old local way. Thus, townspeople call the members of Isaak Rothschild's family the *Eisicks* and the family of Heiman Rothschild become the *Heimans*.

By the 18th Century, at the time of the Salm-Kyrburgs, six generations of another family, the *Schlachter*, live in Sien.

The name itself also goes back to 1808 as a *Sabel Anschel* opts for "*Schlachter*"--- his profession as a butcher--in addition to his being a cattle dealer. Arbitrary decrees from above don't necessarily replace long-held practices and the new-Schlachters are known, for the next 130 years, as the *Anschels*.

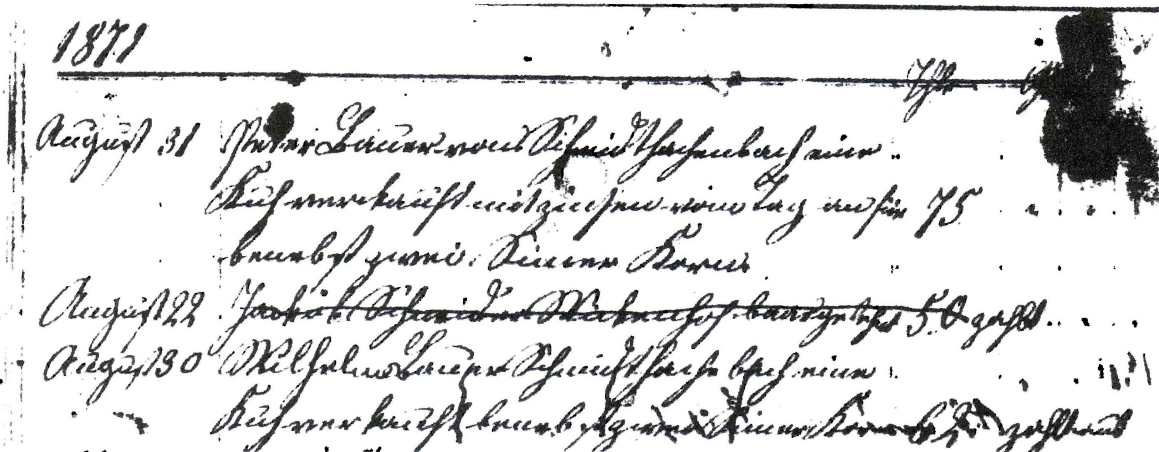
HEIMAN ROTHSCHILD'S BUSINESS JOURNAL.

Official documents usually describe Jews as “laborers”, “butchers”, “second hand traders”, “cattle dealers” or simply “businessmen” said to deal in linen, second hand goods with most in cattle and horse trading, for which they are known far and wide. A drawback is that many others are involved in that latter trade and it isn't the easiest way to make a living. Just about everyone is involved in another trade, be it butcher or middleman.

Trading taking them far and wide, they generally know where something is available and where someone has need of something ---be it farm animals, fruit, seeds etc. “*They were even involved in bridal matchmaking*” recalls a since-deceased contemporary.

One of their sidelines, money lending, an early form of banking, is a business necessity long forbidden most Christians by their churches.

Sien born Heiman Rothschild's business journal allows a glimpse into his many-faceted business dealings.



Heiman Rothschild's 1871 Business Journal-- in the former "Gothic-German" script.

Heiman (1838-1916), only boy among six sisters, becomes a butcher, taking over his dad Abraham's business after the latter's passing; no doubt being a butcher stands him in good stead in his business as a cattle dealer.

Heiman's 196 page 6½" by 8½" business Journal covers the period 1870 to 1886 -- including dates, descriptions, names of clients and other participants as well as amounts of sales, purchases and/or monies owed.

Herman Rothschild remains active until his end, so that other volumes of his Journal—though no longer available—do no doubt once exist.

In the 18th Century, Jewish families in Sien still live in the lower part of town, in the so-called “*Untergasse*”, today’s “*Im Winkel*”.

The Rothschild and Schlachter families’ homesteads are located right next to the place assigned by the town fathers as the residence-hovel of the town swineherd---the poor soul entrusted with the town’s population of swine which he herded on the town Commons.

Per a 1768 document, the “*Jew Isaac Levi*”, assessed one guilder for permission to slaughter by the Salm-Kyrburg treasury, lives in “old forest ranger Brandenburg’s house near the bottom of town”. This street is thus the poor neighborhood, the place where those without any rights, the shunned outsiders, live.

This state of affairs changes with the lifting of residence restrictions and the concept of *equality for all* which the French bring in the 19th Century.

We thus see Joseph Rothschild’s sons and daughters moving closer to the village center, near the church and what is then the ducal castle. It isn’t long before there are more Jewish than Gentile families living on the street near the church, so that it becomes known as “*Jurregass*”--*Jew Street*”, a name it carries to this day.

Otherwise, Jewish families are spread throughout the village

It would seem that, despite their religious differences, all inhabitants of Sien do get along. Children grow up together, speak the same local dialect and attend the same Protestant School; they are only separated when it comes to religion classes.

There is evidence of a Jewish religion teacher being in Sien before 1823.

Keeping strictly to the beliefs and usages passed on by their fathers, their Sabbath practices and dietary laws make them stand out to their Gentile neighbors. Since any type of activity is forbidden on the day of rest, on the Sabbath, (between sundown Friday and sundown Saturday), some of these neighbors may, on occasion, lend a hand by lighting the fire, turning on the light or similar small tasks.

No doubt that it isn’t always easy being a minority, when baseless accusations and hateful stereotypes inherited from one’s forebears and from the dominant Religious Sects are the rule rather than the exception.

Religious services are held in a rented room until the 1830's when it is decided to build of a synagogue.

The Mayor of Sien writes on May 25, 1839 to the Royal Prussian authorities at St Wendel, petitioning on behalf of the Jewish Community:

“up until this time, the local Israelites rented a room for their services, but it is now too small as only about half the congregation fits into that space and, besides, the rental agreement has been cancelled. Thus, the building of a house of worship for the Israelites is a dire urgent necessity. The local Israelites, being poor folk, couldn't afford this themselves and thus would appreciate assistance.

An 1850 “*Listing of Israelite Congregations with a synagogue in the Trier district*” mentions the Sien synagogue, with twenty members, as being “average” (no doubt as to its size); thus, it seems that, ten years after the petition, their wishes have become reality.

An almost square—25ft by 28 ft-- slate-roofed sandstone building, the *synagogue* rests on a slight slope on the street leading to the Stenzhorn farm. Due to its location, it almost overwhelms all the secular buildings in that part of town. Four round-arched windows on the street side, three on the other side and two on the front give it a certain dignity as a house of worship.

The entrance is round-arched as well, with a Hebrew inscription from Psalm 188.20: *‘This is the door of the Eternal, the Righteous enter here’*.”

The interior is decorated in gold, brown and light blue colors. On the East, the wall facing Jerusalem, is the niche of the Holy Ark for the Torah scrolls covered with an expensive curtain with, in front, a burning eternal light as well as a seven-branched chandelier. In the middle of the room is a bimah, a reader's platform, around which seating is grouped. The upstairs women's section, supported by wooden beams, is reached by a stair next to the entrance. While synagogues usually hold services in the morning, afternoon and evening, the Sien Community can't muster a quorum of ten men that frequently, lest it interfere with their usual occupations. It is probable that services are only held on the Sabbath and on Holy days, when people from nearby towns also participate.

In the second half of the 19th Century, the synagogue is the focal point of the Jewish Community though, by the turn of that century, things quiet down considerably as increased emigration makes it more and more difficult to have a “*Minyan*”, a quorum of ten adult males, of a Sabbath.

Sabbath services are no longer held regularly, though High Holiday services continue thanks to the joining of people from nearby Hundsbach; by the twenties, there are no longer any services in the Sien synagogue at all.

The existence of a ritual bath—a *Mikvah*—in Sien, has been forgotten after the forcible removal of the last few Jews by the Nazis.

It is quite recently that this spring-fed bath in the former Heiman Rothschild house cellar is brought to light, though the current owners have no idea what this “well” is about. A wooden stair leads down to a 10 ft x 12 ft basement room with a sandstone floor. A bath-like tub, built in an E-W direction, enclosed by butt-jointed sandstones is at the bottom of the stairs. Five stone steps lead to the bottom of the five ft deep bath, usually filled to its brim with groundwater.

The house with the Mikvah has a long history, as an 1841 survey mentions its being, already so long ago, one of the oldest houses in Sien.

The first documented owner of the house is Abraham Rothschild, first-born (1809) son of Jakob Rothschild II; wed to Philippina Carolina Heiman in 1835, they move into what had possibly been his parents’ house.

His wife bore him six daughters and a son, Heiman after the mother’s maiden name—the same Heiman with the afore-mentioned business ledger.

The presence of so many females in the household possibly gives the impetus to the building of that Mikvah.

The use of the Mikvah before the Sabbath and Holy days is optional for men but mandatory for women before their wedding, after menstruation and after having given birth. Maybe pater familias Abraham Rothschild doesn’t want his wife and daughters go about, each and every month, looking for a ritual bath elsewhere. No doubt others are also welcome to use the bath in the Rothschild house.

All married, the daughters move to the four corners of the globe; the house is bought by Heiman from his father’s estate (deed of sale dated 12.18.1872) ---the house remaining in his family until the bitter end in 1942.

After Henriette and Rosalie, Heiman Rothschild’s two daughters and last Rothschild occupants of the house are deported, the Rothschild homestead is illegally taken over by the German Reich.

After WWII, surviving family and legal heirs living in the US sue to have it returned to them and obtain it on August 25, 1955 as part of war reparations, what Germany called “Wiedergutmachung”— (“the setting of things right again”).

In 1957, the house is sold to a Lorenz Feistel who has work done on it over the years so that it now looks completely different; the basement room where the Mikvah is located has been untouched and remains as was. It is as if that ritual bath in a Sien basement survives all these years as a sleeping beauty. Thus, a cultural witness to the existence of the Sien Jewish Community remains untouched.

The *Jewish cemetery* is outside of town as prescribed by religious rules commanding the separation of the dwellings of the living from those of the deceased.

It is located about a mile and a half from the town center towards the Southeast in the “*Huben*” precinct, on the commons known as “Upper young tree growth” (*Obere Jungewald*); it is bounded by woods on three sides whereas the North side faces a vast expanse of fields and meadows.

This piece of real estate, now a cemetery and under “*Denkmalschutz*” (Federal German Monument Oversight) was, and is, the property of the Sien municipality.

An 1841 Sien cadastral survey mentions an older adjacent cemetery to the immediate East, where are also two East-facing tombstone bases and an East-facing partial tomb enclosure as well as several small East-West running tumuli, possibly old burying places.

The present cemetery, recently enclosed by a wooden fence, thus only includes the more recent section of a much larger burying ground.

One of five tombstones recently discovered on the hilly ground behind the cemetery bears the date 5553 in Hebrew script, meaning 1793 CE. It no doubt comes from the now overgrown part of the old cemetery. No tombstone in the main cemetery bears an earlier date.

There are five parallel rows totaling 51 tombstones-- fewer than had once been the case. A straight, paved, path of recent date separates the front two rows from the other three. Burying in rows and in chronological order only starts in the 19th Century; whereas burial in rows is indeed followed, there seems to have been no steadfast chronological burying, although the oldest graves are on the first of the easternmost row.

More attention seems to have been given to family relationships when locating a specific burial place; thus, members of the Schlachter family are overwhelmingly in the second row; even without looking at the inscriptions but as evidenced by identical tombstones, it is obvious that spouses are buried side by side.

At the start of one of the darkest chapters of German History, after the power-grab by Adolf Hitler on January 30, 1933, the Jewish Community of Sien consists of only ten people.

The *last Rothschilds living in Sien*, in the ancestral home, in that fateful year are spinster sisters Rosalie and Henriette, daughters of Heiman Rothschild (passed away in 1916) and wife Sara, née Herz in Offenbach-on-Glan (passed away in 1907).

Two other daughters, Clara and Johanna, long ago moved to the US. Heiman and Sara's two sons passed away in 1917—Alexander, handicapped, in a home for invalids in nearby Merzig while the other one, Hermann, died due to a wound received in the First World War.

The girls subsist partly on the sale of their knitting and crochet-work and partly off some savings—Rosalie having been for many years a cook in Paris—as well as on a small pension. Until the very end, they are in regular mail contact with their two sisters in the US.

A family by the name of Herz also resides in Sien at that time; it consists of Moses Herz, born in nearby Kirchenbollenbach, together with his three daughters Johanna, Hedwig and Thekla. Mother Caroline, of the many-branched Rothschild clan, passed away in 1913.

Moses and his daughters run a grocery store across the street from what had been the ducal hunting lodge, known locally as “the Castle”.

Every day, without fail, eighty years old Moses is there behind his counter.

In that fateful year of 1933, there are also four persons by the name of Schlachter still residing in Sien: Albert Schlachter, his wife Rosalie, née Blum in nearby Gauersheim, their son Kurt and Albert's bachelor brother Jakob.

The other six Schlachter siblings had moved away while brother Bernhard had died in World War One.

Serving in the German Emperor's Armies in the recent conflict, Albert lost his hearing, an ailment which greatly affects him as the last Jewish cattle dealer in the area.

In 1933, Albert and Rosalie's only son Kurt, born in 1926, is already enrolled as a second year student in the Protestant Public School.

Jakob Schlachter, the bachelor brother living with them, doesn't have a regular job but is listed as a casual part-time laborer.

An anti-Semitic hate campaign starts throughout the German Reich as soon as Adolf Hitler seizes power.

Sien doesn't seem to pay much attention to the oft-repeated calls for a boycott of Jewish businesses. It is probable that ties which had bound the two communities during tens, nay hundreds, of years are too strong.

Moses Herz goes about his daily life in the early years of the Third Reich without losing any business. It is only when some of his clients are called "Jew-lovers"—or, later, threatened with a fine for a repeat-offense in the Nazi rag—"Der Stürmer"—posted in front of the Town Hall, that people start either to give the little store a wide berth or only go there in secret.

Never-ending threats and laws reduce the freedom of the Jewish population, such as the right to vote, inasmuch as, per the recently promulgated "Nürnberg Laws", they no longer are German citizens.

Albert Schlachter is directly affected by the January 25, 1937 Law which specifically forbids "non-Aryans" from being cattle dealers. In actual fact, this is really nothing new, as the local Powers-that-be have been dragging on and on, on spurious grounds, the issuance of his cattle-dealing permit. He is now forced to also rely on work as a casual laborer, such as helping farmers at harvest time, in order to earn his family's daily bread.

From the earliest, the various government offices are busy in their anti-Jewish campaigns. When the Synagogue- - - though orphaned, but still belonging to the Jewish Community-- is up for grabs as a possible home for the youth wing of the Nazi Party, the Hitler Youth, both the Weierbach administrators of the towns of Sien and the Grumbach town-fathers outdo each other to come up with legalese grounds to take over the building.

A letter dated March 2, 1934 from Weierbach-Sien Town-Hall to Grumbach Town-Hall reads as follows: ". . . *please be good enough to verify the enclosed document and to give me a sign as to how one may most easily arrange matters in order to achieve what one has in mind. . .* "

In this manner, the forced auction of the synagogue is arranged for July 17, 1935 with the Town of Sien winning with a high bid of 1 000 RM. As the City doesn't have that money, it sells the synagogue a year later to a friendly private party who has it transformed into a dwelling.

On November 9/10, 1938, in the course of the so-called "*Kristallnacht*"—the Night of Broken Glass—Jewish dwellings and businesses are destroyed, synagogues set afire and Jewish people attacked in what the Nazis call a "spontaneous" event.

On the next day, namely on November 10, 1938, so it goes in Sien where there occur attacks on innocent people and their property. Several Storm troopers from nearby Offenbach-on-Glan receive the infamous command to "*get to it against the Jews in the surrounding towns*".

After their destroying four dwellings in nearby Grumbach, they reach Sien mid-afternoon. They first look for Moses Herz' house; old Moses having passed away a year earlier, his two daughters, Johanna and Thekla, in their fifties, still live in the house and continue to keep the store-- their sister Hedwig having also passed away.

Elmar Schneider, then a school-age boy, remembers:

"I was sitting on the steps of Jakob Nicks shop across from the school, waiting for the start of my confirmation classes, when I suddenly heard all hell breaking loose at Moses' place. I can still see those two Jewish sisters run screaming out into the street, with their hands in front of their faces and almost getting hit by pieces of furniture being thrown out of the upstairs windows of their house".

Drawn by the racket, others come running and are shocked by that incredible scene. "*I stood across from Moses' store*" remembers Annemarie Huck "*and saw a fellow from Langweiler kick in the windows with his boots. They were beautiful carved glass windows. I saw china and clothing flying out the broken windows. I can still hear a voice in the crowd shouting: "throw that red plaid down this way" and then a man pushed me away.*"

The late Anna Mehler remembers that those men cut the featherbeds and shook the feathers out the windows.

Elli Pieroth Müller remembers this telephone pole near the school wall and "*there stood one of our teachers, stiff as a rod and white as a sheet, looking on at what was going on in the Herz sisters' house*".

Is it possible that the teacher, previously possibly blinded by the Nazi's propaganda, as were many others, now saw the inhumanity of their ideology? He didn't intervene nor did anyone else dare put a stop to the destructiveness by those Storm Troopers. Near old Moses Herz' store, those storm troopers continued their ravages along the street. They split into two groups. One group made it into the house of the Rothschild sisters, the other group into the neighboring Schlachter house.

"They just kicked in the front door" remembers Ella Scheel who lived nearby at that time and thus saw the happening close up.

"No doubt that deaf Albert Schlachter didn't hear what was going on, so his wife Rosa got so much the more scared. Albert was cleaning rosebuds or beechnuts as those men came running in the door. They hit that poor fellow with their fists and claimed later that he had threatened them with a knife. That is some joke, as Anschels Albert was a small delicate fellow who wouldn't think of harming a fly. He fled and ran down the street. They ran after him. Jakob Schneider stood himself in front of them and threatened them with his raised ax: "Nobody's gonna hit anybody here. This fellow lost his hearing fighting for Germany in the last war." So they gave up running after him and just destroyed his house and threw more furnishings out into the street, just as the other bunch had done over at the Heiman girls' place".

The synagogue, now in private hands, is spared. The Nazis thugs take themselves to the cemetery and damage what they can, overthrowing some tombstones and throwing some off the nearby slope. They then drive eight miles to *Becherbach*, to do their worst to the Moritz family and their house.

The pogrom diminishes the Jews' few legal rights and makes life even more precarious. Next day, the Nazis enforce an 8.17.1938 ordinance per which *"as of January 1, 1939, all Jewish males shall bear the additional first name of Israel and females, the additional first name of Sara"*.

Adding injury to infamy, they are to file a request and pay a fee.

Thus Albert Schlachter writes, on 12.12.1938, to the Sien Township:
"I hereby request, in accordance with the relevant legislation, the addition in the birth registry of the first name "Israel" to my first name of Albert. I was born 6.21 1889 in Sien where I reside at house number 52. I also request an additional first name for my son Kurt, born in Sien 3.15, 1926".

Elise Schachter, Albert's sister, has already written on November 19 1938 from Hamburg to the office in Weierbach:

"I hereby request the addition of the first name of Sara in my entry in the birth register for the year 1895 Number 10 of January 15, 1895. My address is: c/o Griesman in Hamburg-Altona, Neueburg #20."

The German Reich Ministry of Education forbids, as of 11.15.1938, Jewish children's attendance in public schools on the lame reason that *"it would be asking too much of any German teacher—given the recent assassination in Paris— to teach Jewish children and, as well, to expect German children to sit with Jews in the same classroom"*.

Thus comes the day when young Kurt Schlachter has to stay away from the Sien Protestant School he attends regularly since Easter 1932.

None of his former schoolmates recall the exact date of his leaving. Even the school records make no mention of his having left the school-----



1936 Sien School photo.

Kurt Schlachter is the tall boy bottom row right.

Note the uniforms—“Nazi Party” uniform for the teacher, “Hitler Youth” for the boys, BDM (Bund Deutscher Mädchen) uniforms for the girls.

Kurt Schlachter is simply erased from memory as if he had never existed, though he does appear in a number of class pictures.

Young Kurt, then in his thirteenth year, leaves Sien on May 17, 1939 according to the Weierbach police registry. He is recorded as having moved to Cologne-Braunsfeld where, in Aachener Street, stands the Abraham-Frank House, a Jewish orphanage and children’s home. It is probable that Kurt is allowed to live here and to continue with his schooling.

A few days after the start of WW II. on 9.12.39, shopping restrictions are imposed on Jews. Elli Pieroth Müller knows firsthand how humiliating these regulations could be. Then an apprentice-salesgirl at the Cilli Nick store, she recalls that *Jewish people always had to wait in front of the counter until all other customers were served.*”

As of 7.4.40, they can shop only between four and five P.M. and, as of 9.1.41, are forbidden to be outdoors without wearing a yellow Star of David.

Things get more and more difficult for them to live and to survive in this environment. Though they feel German, of the Jewish faith with German roots, the Nazis simply deny them their German identity and make them out to be enemies of the Nazi Aryan State.

Local members or followers of the Nazi Party report on every contact one may have with them. Most people thus avoid them. By the same token, they make an effort not to have any contact with their Gentile neighbors and acquaintances, in order not to cause them problems.

They now live very isolated lives, especially since young toughs, of course influenced by the official Nazi anti-Jewish campaign, may taunt them without fear of anyone in authority, be it either the police, their parents or their teachers, calling them to account.

There exist however good courageous neighbors who help them secretly with the basics of life. The small signs of human solidarity which they also experience may at least give them a minimum of support and hope as well as the feeling that they are not abandoned by everyone. Even those occasional signs of good will do not change anything as far as the ever increasing problems being created for them by those in power.

The Nazi State having given itself the power to confiscate Jewish assets per a new law of July 14, 1933, on the grounds that their owners are enemies of the State, residents of Sien eventually also suffer the consequences.

On June 13, 1941 the following message is received by the Court at Birkenfeld from a company called “Rheinisches Heim” a so-called *Gemeinutzige Siedlungsgesellschaft*: “Subject: *Sien land registry nr.Bd.3 Bl.112.*

Owner: Albert Schlacher in Sien.

The above-named owner is a Jew and owns the agricultural property entered into the register as above. That parcel is to be taken over by us in accordance with applicable regulations. Before we do so, it is advisable that we know what, if any, liens may be entered on the property. Please let us have your advice in this regard... Salutations. Heil Hitler.”

The so-called “Berlin *Wannsee-Conference*” of 1.20.42, where the “*Final Solution of the Jewish Question*” is agreed, essentially calls for the systematic murdering of all Jews living in the German Nazi sphere of control, starting the murder of a human group, the Shoah, the Holocaust.

As a result, the death camps of Auschwitz and Treblinka are built in the Eastern part of German-occupied Poland.

A few days before the deportations from Sien on 4.29.42, a forced auction of the Rothschild sisters’ household takes place.

The then-30 years old Elli Friese still can’t forget that day:

“All the belongings of the two “Heimans” girls were auctioned off, the kitchen utensils, their lovely handiwork, everything, even the laundry bucket with laundry soaking inside. Henriette and Rosalie looked on sadly from an upstairs window”.

We don’t know what happened to whatever monies were thus collected. It is probable that the 60 RM in travel expenses which they are forced to come up with for their own travel to their death is thus raised.

Of course, the Nazis don’t talk of transportation to death camps, but mention something about vacation resorts and convalescent homes. Such sudden good will and compassion is quite hard to swallow. No doubt that the victims do not kid themselves as to their true destination given that they are only allowed a backpack or a small piece of luggage as well as one blanket.

On that fateful day, Lorenz Gemmel, driving his dad’s horse cart under the supervision of the local policeman, takes Albert Schlachter, his wife Rosa as well as the two sisters Johanna and Thekla Herz to the Fischbach rail station: “As we got to the Redenbacher pond, Albert desperately yelled at me from the back:

“Lorenz” he screamed, “Stop. I’m gonna jump into that lake”.

To this day it hasn’t been possible to determine to which place Rosa and Albert Schlachter are deported after their leaving the rail station in Fischbach.

The two Herz sisters have been presumed dead since that time, although their names do not appear on any of the several printed memorials to the victims of the Nazis.

Two persons bearing the name “Johanna Herz” are on a Terezin deportation list; though it isn’t possible to establish if one of those two names does in fact correspond to Johanna Herz from Sien.

We are better informed as to what happens to the two sisters Henrietta and Rosalie Rothschild, as per advice from the "Theresienstadt Foundation" in Terezin, Czechoslovakia:

"Mrs. Rosalie Rothschild (dob 10.29.1873) was deported to Terezin on transport III/2 (origin Trier-Koblenz) on 7.28.1942.

She passed away there on 8.4.1942.

The deportation list gives "Sien number 58" as her last address.

Mrs. Henriette Rothschild (dob 8.6.1875) of the same address was deported with her.

The latter was deported from Terezin to Treblinka on Transport Bo on 9.19.1942 where, without a doubt, she perished".

It hasn't been possible to determine where the sisters spent the time between April and July 1942, possibly at an assembly point in what was then called a "Jewhouse", or possibly in a Jewish old people's home.

According to the regional "Koblenzer Nationalblatt" of 10.27.39, Albert Schlachter's brother Jacob received a one year prison sentence (on trumped up charges) by a Koblenz Court. Upon release, he is remanded to an institution in Bendorf-Sayn and deported on 4.30.42 to a place unknown.

Young Kurt Schlachter, Albert and Rosa Schlachter's boy, after some schooling in Cologne-Braunsfeld, becomes a forced laborer in the armaments industry.

He never gets to see his hometown of Sien again.

At the end, he is living in a Youth Hostel in Berlin at Rosenstrasse 2-4.

On 12.14.42, with 810 others he is shipped by train to Auschwitz via Riga which is, as is "Terezin",--in German "Theresienstadt"--a transit point to the death camps.

On the day preceding his deportation, seventeen years old Kurt Schlachter fills out a form listing all his assets.

We thus learn that he has no earthly possessions other than the 15RM in weekly pay as a forced laborer which the State owes him.

A few weeks after Kurt's deportation, the government Finance Office in Berlin confiscates Kurt's last weekly wage with an entry dated 1.27.43 to the effect that ***"this is capital which reverts to the Reich"***

SIEN JEWISH HOLOCAUST VICTIMS AND THEIR RELATIONS

Possibly not complete

Key: dpd: "deported, presumed dead".

***HERZ Johanna** born Sien 5.23.1882 –dpd

Parents: Moses and Karoline Herz

***HERZ Thekla** born Sien 5.12.1891 –dpd

Parents: Moses and Karoline Herz

***ROTHSCHILD Henriette** born Sien 8.6.1875 –dpd Treblinka

Parents: Heiman and Sara Rothschild

***ROTHSCHILD Rosalie** born Sien 10.29.1873 –dpd,

died 8.4.1942 in Terezin. Parents: Heiman and Sara Rothschild



***SCHLACHTER Alfred** born Sien 3.7.1901 –dpd Auschwitz

Parents: Joseph and Ida Schlachter

***SCHLACHTER Elise** born Sien 1.12.1895 – dpd Riga

Parents: Joseph and Ida Schlachter



***SCHLACHTER Jacob** born Sien 4.26.1891 – dpd

Parents: Joseph and Ida Schlachter



***SCHLACHTER Albert** born Sien 6.21.1889 – dpd

Parents: Joseph and Ida Schlachter

***SCHLACHTER Rosa** née Blum in Gauerheim 7.1.1892 dpd

married to Albert Schlachter, mother of Kurt.

***SCHLACHTER Elizabeth** née Rothschild in Oberweiler 5.3.1873 dpd
died Terezin 3.8.43. 1st spouse of Adolph Schlachter



***SCHLACHTER Kurt**

born Sien 3.15.1926 dpd 1943 Riga/Auschwitz
Parents: Albert and Rosa Schlachter

***SCHLACHTER Albert** born Niedereisenbach 11.30.1904 dpd died
3.26.1943 Auschwitz. Parents: Adolph and Elizabeth SCHLACHTER

***SCHLACHTER Elizabeth** née Sonnheim in Neuhemsbach 2.26.1867 –
dpd died Terezin 8.18.1943. Wife of Simon (Samuel) SCHLACHTER

***MEYER Selma** nee SCHLACHTER, born Sien 5.4.1894 dpd Auschwitz.
Parents: Simon and Elizabeth SCHLACHTER

***ROTHSCHILD BERTHA** née Bärmann in Dörrebach 3.17.1856 dpd died
5.2.1943 Terezin, 87 years of age. Wife of Moses Rothschild

***FRENKEL Wilhelm** born Sien 9.8.1878 dpd
Parents: Gabriel and Adelheid FRENKEL

***FRENKEL Rosa** born Hundsbach 7.21 1883 dpd Izbica.
Parents: Heinrich and Sara Frenkel

***BAER Bertha** née Frenkel in Hundsbach 8.14.1880 dpd Auschwitz.
Parents: Heinrich and Sara Frenkel

***MORITZ Henriette** née Rosenfeld in Hoffenheim 8.9.1859 dpd died 1942
Mother-in-law of Hermann Rothschild

***LOEB Klara Karolina** née MORITZ in Becherbach 3.20 1889 dpd died
12.31.1942 Auschwitz Sister-in-law of Hermann Rothschild

***MORITZ Frieda Paula** born Becherbach 5.2.1890 dpd declared dead
3.8.1945 Sister-in-law of Hermann Rothschild

***HANAU Rosalie** née Stern in Oberreidenbach 7.10 1874 dpd murdered
Auschwitz. Daughter of Isaak Stern I

***STERN Fanny** born 8.18.1878 Oberreidenbach dpd Isaak Stern II dgtr.

***STERN Auguste** born 9.21.1881 Oberreidenbach dpd Isaak Stern II dgtr.

***STERN Thekla** born 2.28.1886 Oberreidenbach dpd Isaak Stern II dgtr.