

Laying of Stolpersteine for the Meyerstein/ Meiniger family, Wednesday, September 21  
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Shalom, dear audience,

For a few minutes we would like to take you to seven members of the Meyerstein family. Under the roof of their house on Wöhlerstraße 6, not only family members found refuge from the enormous political, social and economic caesura between the years 1912 and 1940.

In April 1912, the family of nine of Rosa and Max Meyerstein (1865-1933) left the village of Bremke, 9 kilometres southeast of Göttingen, for their new home in the university town of Göttingen.

Over more than 200 years, branches of the Meyerstein family were grounded in Bremke, to grow from generation to generation far beyond the region and Göttingen into the country. In the last third of the 19th century, legal changes facilitated the migration to larger towns among Jewish rural families. The hope for better economic prospects and higher education combined with social integration were central motives.

From his work as a merchant for manufactured goods in Bremke, Max Meyerstein had sufficient funds to purchase this house at his disposal. He sold the house in Bremke in 1913. Permanent existence as well as the costs of the education of his seven children born between 1900 and 1908 seemed to be secured.

But it should turn out differently ....

### **Rosa Meyerstein née Rosenbaum (1867-1942)**

In 1899, Rosa Rosenbaum, known as Röschen, married Max Meyerstein, a merchant two years her senior, in Bremke at the age of 32. She had been born in 1867 in Förste, district of Osterode am Harz, where her father Abraham Rosenbaum (ca. 1825-1880) had worked as a merchant in the surrounding region.

Tasks as a mother and housewife occupied Rosa's life.

On 3 February 1933, three days after the seizure of power by the NSDAP, Rosa Meyerstein became a widow and had now to live up to her new role as house-owner and landlady. Her husband had died at the age of 67. Rosa and her children had to experience how anti-Jewish laws and decrees destroyed their existence, how aggressive Nazi propaganda stirred up hatred and wrest their dignity from them. After the November pogrom, family members from Bremke and northern Hesse increasingly took shelter with her. When she attracted the attention of official land speculations in 1940, she had to sell her house and land. Gertrud, the eldest daughter who had been living in Wolfenbüttel since 1919, supported her mother and four siblings in a special way in these hard times, also financially.

Rosa Meyerstein and her children Margarete, Lucie and Arnold found temporary accommodation with the Jewish widow Toni Löwenherz. In July 1941, by order of the authorities and based on the law on tenancies with Jews of 30 April 1939, they moved into

the Jewish nursing home on Weender Landstraße. Here, Rosa Meyerstein had to pay a so-called "pension price" of RM 104.00 to the Reich Association for the Jews in Germany. In order to be able to raise this amount, she had to ask the foreign exchange control office at the regional finance office in Hanover to release a corresponding amount from her blocked account once a month.

At the age of 75, Rosa Meyerstein was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto via the Hanover-Ahlem collection camp on 21 July 1942. Two months later, she was deported to the Treblinka extermination camp from there. On the day of her arrival, on 26 September 1942, Rosa Meyerstein was murdered.

Prior to this, she had to sign one of the so-called home purchase contracts in Göttingen, a fraudulent manoeuvre that the Reich Association had to agree to, apparently without knowing exactly what she was [they were] doing. [Anm. d. Übers.: Bezug unklar!]

### **Margarete Meyerstein (1901-1942)**

Margarete was born on 10 April 1901 in Bremke as the second daughter. Together with her older sister Gertrud and the younger sister Margot she attended the municipal secondary school for girls (now Hainberg Gymnasium) as of August 1912. She left school early after 3 ½ years. Between 1920 and 1928 she learned how to run a household as a so-called house daughter (comparable to an au pair nowadays) in several stations with familial connection. She remained in the family circle until the day of her deportation on 26 March 1942. Together with her sister Lucie, her brother-in-law Kurt Meininger and more than 80 other Jewish residents of Göttingen, she was deported four days later from the Hanover-Ahlem collection camp to the Warsaw Ghetto and subsequently murdered.

### **Lucie Meyerstein (1903-1942)**

Daughter Lucie was born deaf on 13 December 1903 in Bremke. Therefore, her parents purposefully enrolled her at the age of nine in a school for the deaf-mute where she was to learn to read and write. Training in the area of housekeeping followed. Between 1926 and 1927, Lucie pursued household work for relatives in Göttingen. Lucie stayed at her mother's and siblings' side until she married the 47-year-old Kurt Meininger on 31 December 1941. Subsequently, she could live in Kurt's Göttingen family home for another three months.

I wonder if, by this step, both of them hoped to be able to escape the threatening deportation "to the East".

Since the "Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring" had come into force on 1 January 1934, they were threatened with enforced sterilisation – a danger Lucie, Betty and Kurt had permanently to face. Lucie and Kurt were each assigned a court-appointed guardian of Jewish denomination.

Lucie and her husband Kurt Meininger were deported to the Warsaw Ghetto via the Hannover-Ahlem collection camp on 26 March 1942 and subsequently murdered.

### **Kurt Meininger (1894-1942)**

Kurt Meininger was the youngest of nine children of the entrepreneurial family Mendel Meininger (1846-1903) and Regine née Meyerstein (1853-1941). Together with Kurt's uncle, his father had run the company "Meininger Bros." in the livestock trade for three decades; as a special distinction, the title, "Purveyor to His Majesty and the Emperor and King" was conferred on him. Son Kurt was born on 15 November 1884 in Göttingen.

The early death of his father in 1903 accompanied by the transfer of the company to his mother was a decisive turning point in the life of the young Kurt.

Kurt spent his childhood far away from his family home as of 1905. He then received a three-years' training as a gardener at Israelite educational institutions. During the First World War, Kurt was conscripted for maintenance work for a short time. Kurt repeatedly found shelter and refuge for weeks, sometimes months, in the families of his sisters, especially from escalating anti-Semitic agitation after 1933. In addition, their financial support saved Kurt from even greater hardship.

After the November pogrom, Kurt was deported from Ossendorf to the Buchenwald concentration camp for four weeks.

Kurt could work as a gardener for the local Lange nursery in October 1940.

Subsequently, his further life crossed the paths of Arnold, Lucie and Margarete Meyerstein.

### **Betty Meyerstein (1905-1943)**

Daughter Betty was born on 24 January 1905 in Bremke, also deaf like her sister Lucie. Appropriate lessons and the learning of housekeeping tasks allowed for several jobs until 1924. After having returned to Wöhlerstraße 6, Betty Meyerstein left Göttingen in 1929 for Berlin where relatives were already living.

What hopes and goals did she take with her? So far, little is known about her years in Berlin, research is under way.

In 1936, Betty returned to Göttingen for three months once again. After 1938, Betty moved several times in Berlin.

On 2 March 1943, the "32nd East Transport" with 1837 Jewish residents of Berlin left the Putlitzstraße goods station in Berlin-Moabit directly for the Auschwitz extermination camp. Among them was Betty Meyerstein, too.

### **Ludwig Meyerstein (1906-1942)**

Son Ludwig was born in Bremke on 16 July 1906. He left the Göttingen higher vocational school (today Felix-Klein-Gymnasium) after 3 ½ years and subsequently trained as a commercial assistant.

Around 1928 Ludwig Meyerstein moved to Berlin, with a look of new hope in his eyes?

On 10 February 1933, Ludwig became the father of an illegitimate daughter. Her descendants are present here today. By the way: it is only thanks to their consent that we are able to lay Stolpersteine for the Meyerstein family today.

Ludwig's arrest and conviction for "racial defilement" in the year 1937 is a different matter. The "Nuremberg Laws" of 1935 legitimized the racist and anti-Semitic ideology of the National Socialists. They led to a leap in the agitation against Jewish men and denunciations like that one which Ludwig fell a victim to in a fatal way.

After more than five years, Ludwig Meyerstein succumbed to the physical and mental aftermath of his odyssey through Berlin prisons and the Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps on 25 March 1942 at the age of 33. His sister-in-law Gertrud and his sister Betty succeeded in having the urn with Ludwig's ashes buried at the Jewish cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee before they were deported.

His sister-in-law Gertrud and sister Betty successfully tried to have Ludwig's urn from Buchenwald concentration camp buried at the Jewish cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee. [Anm. d. Übers.: So ähnlich im vorhergehenden Absatz!]

### **Arnold Meyerstein (1908-1942)**

As the last child, son Arnold was born on 5 April 1908 in Bremke.

After having attended the higher vocational school for about three years, he continued to live at home. Little is known about his further life, research is under way.

In 1936, Arnold Meyerstein had to do physically hard work for a civil engineering company, and in 1941 again for a construction company in a "gang of Jews" specially set up where Kurt Meininger and relatives of the Meyerstein's had to work as well.

In 1937, Arnold Meyerstein's name was publicly displayed in the so-called "Stürmer boxes" under the heading "never-ending racial defilement" in an issue of "Der Stürmer", the Nazis' most abrasive hate sheet. No source references to possible consequences are known up to now.

On 18 June 1941, Arnold Meyerstein married in Berlin. He was again compelled to do forced labour there: in a construction unit of the Deutsche Reichsbahn at the hourly wage of 0.85 RM.

On 9 December 1942, 1061 Jewish residents of Berlin were deported by the "24th East Transport" via the Große Hamburger Straße collection camp from the Putlitzstraße goods station in Berlin-Moabit directly to the Auschwitz extermination camp and murdered there, among them Arnold Meyerstein and his wife Gertrud née Lewinsohn (1904-1942).

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The balance is depressing. None of the family of nine and the two children-in-law survived the Nazi dictatorship. The places of their murder were the Buchenwald concentration camp, the Warsaw Ghetto and the Auschwitz and Treblinka extermination camps. The father Max Meyerstein and one daughter escaped the Shoa thanks to early death.

Quite a few keys to the present and future lie in the history of their biographies.

A Hebrew blessing reads:

"May their souls be secure in the shelter of the living".

Shalom.