

Weiden



The existence of Jews in Weiden is first mentioned towards the middle of the 14th century; presumably these were only very few Jews who temporarily lived here. The Jewish tax and the Jewish body toll - introduced under the reign of Duke Ludwig VII of Bavaria-Ingolstadt - were mentioned in 1416. Towards the middle of the 15th century Jews are said to have been expelled from Weiden; their expulsion is documented in the second half of the 16th century at the latest. In 1636, the city of Weiden had to take in eight Jewish families on the instructions of the regional authorities - against the will of the citizens; However, their stay ended after a short time, since there was considerable resistance on the part of the Christian inhabitants and the sovereign gave in and revoked the Jews' right to stay again;

It would take several centuries until a synagogue association was founded in Weiden at the end of the 1880s, from which an independent community grew in 1895; the members came mainly from the rural community Floss. The reason for the influx was certainly the fact that Weiden developed rapidly economically after being connected to the railway network.

The first prayer room was located between 1882 and 1889 in Joseph Wilmersdörfer's private house at the Oberen Tor (see fig. below). After the founding of the synagogue association (1889), the prayer room, community rooms and school were housed in a new building on the Ringstrasse. 1889 was ceremonially opened by the Flosser Rabbi Israel Wittelshöfer. The two-storey building hardly differed from the neighboring houses; only the three windows on the upper floor, designed in the neo-Gothic style, suggested that it was used as a Jewish house of prayer.

Years later, when serious construction defects became apparent, the building was extensively renovated and expanded in 1905.

A Jewish elementary teacher was employed by the community to carry out religious tasks; at times another person was employed for the slaughtering. Regular religious instruction has been given in Weiden since 1878. Almost a decade later there was an Israelite elementary school - initially run as a private school; this existed until 1902, before it was continued until the end of the 1930s as the "Israelitische Volkshauptschule".

Around 1900, the community had acquired its own cemetery grounds north-east of the old town on Fohlenweg; up to this point, the Floßer burial ground served as the final resting place for the Weiden Jews.

Until the death of Rabbi Israel Wittelshöfer, the Jewish community in Weiden belonged to the Floss Rabbinat, joined the Bayreuth Rabbinat in 1896 and was

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assigned to the Regensburg District Rabbinate in 1911. Since 1931, the community of Weiden belonged to the new district rabbinate of Regensburg-Neumarkt.

Jews in Weiden:

around	1480	.....	4 Jewish	Familys,
---	1640	.....	about 60	Jews
---	1833	.....	2	"
---	1875	.....	31	"
---	1890	.....	106	"
---	1910	.....	156	"
---	1920	.....	164	"
---	1925	.....	154	"
---	1929	.....	175	"
---	1933	.....	168	"
---	1935 (Jan)	.....	138	"
---	1937 (Nov.)	.....	103	"
---	1939 (Oct.)	.....	16	"
---	1941 (Oct.)	.....	12	"
---	1942 (May)	.....	no	"
---	1945 (Dec.)	.....	about 470	"
---	1946 (Dec.)	.....	about 650	"
---	1962	.....	51	"

Information from: Baruch Z. Ophir/Falk Wiesemann, The Jewish communities in Bavaria 1918 - 1945, p. 100 and Michael Brenner, Using Weiden as an example - Jewish everyday life under National Socialism, p. 53

The Jewish residents of Weiden earned their living primarily in the trade in hops, glass products and fabrics; they were also regionally involved in the livestock trade; there were also numerous smaller businessmen who covered the everyday needs of the mostly rural population.

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hist. postcard, around 1915 (from: wikipedia.org, public domain)



The Upper Gate, to the right of it the commercial and residential building of Joseph Wilmersdörfer (historical postcard, PKMüller Collection)

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Residence of Joseph Wilmersdörfer (historical postcard, PKMüller Collection)

At the beginning of the Nazi dictatorship in 1933, about 180 Jews lived in Weiden - out of a total population of almost 23,000. The boycott measures of 1933 met with little response from the local population; In order to keep customers from shopping in Jewish shops, "Aryan" buyers were publicly branded in so-called "shame columns". As early as January 1933, the shop windows of two Jewish shops had been smashed by the Nazis; in the weeks that followed, anti-Jewish slogans were scrawled on house walls. After 1934 the Jews of Weiden were increasingly discriminated against; as early as the summer of 1934, the city administration had forbidden Jews to visit the municipal swimming pool. In December of the same year, the shop windows of Jewish shops were smashed, presumably as a reaction to a hate article in the Nazi newspaper "Bayrische Ostmark". NS members dressed in civilian clothes blocked the way for "Aryan" customers into Jewish shops with the notice: "This is a Jewish shop, you are not allowed to buy here!" Between 1937 and 1939 more and more Jewish businessmen gave up their businesses; most of the shops located in the city center disappeared from the street scene; most of their owners emigrated. At the end of April 1938 the following lines appeared in the newspaper "Bayrische Ostmark": most of the shops located in the city center disappeared from the streetscape; most of their owners emigrated. At the end of April 1938 the following lines appeared in the newspaper "Bayrische Ostmark": most of the shops located in the city center disappeared from the streetscape; most of their owners emigrated. At the end of April 1938 the following lines appeared in the newspaper "Bayrische Ostmark":

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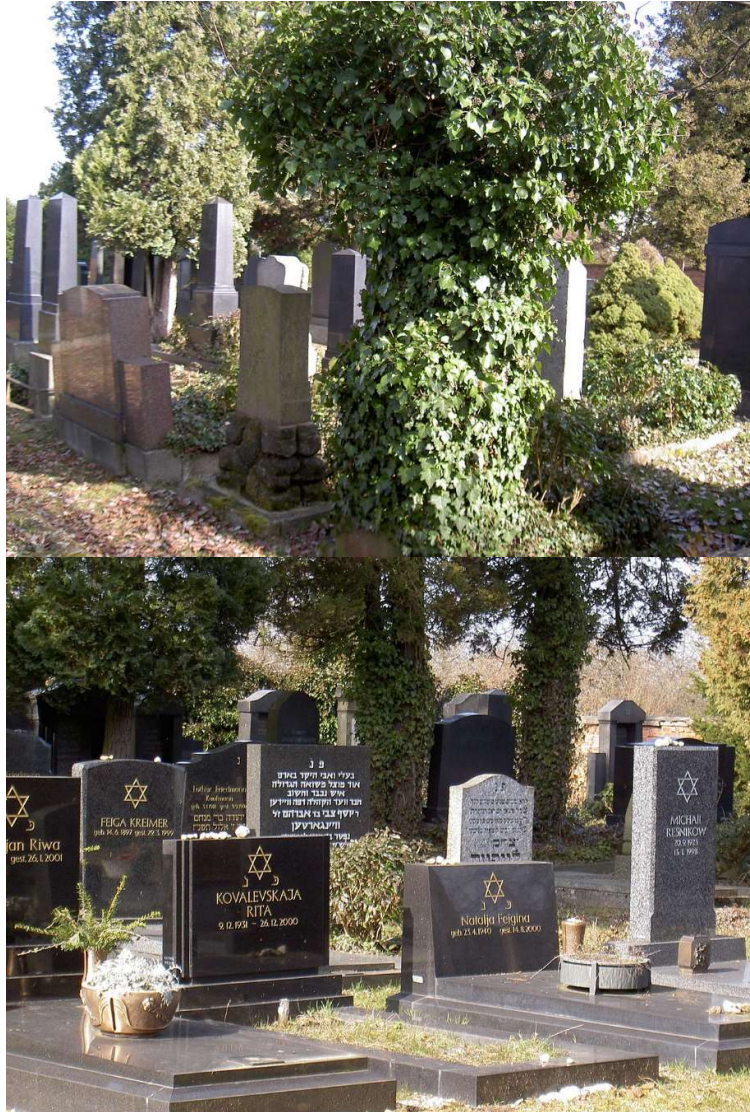
"... The Jews are migrating. For the first time since the turn of the century, the number of Jews living in Weiden has fallen below 100. As of April 1, 1938, there are now 97 Jews living in our city. We hope that too these decide to leave to a greater extent in the coming period.... Weiden can count itself lucky that it has lost half of its Jewish parasites since 1933. We would be even happier if the last Jew also lost the dust of his homeland, who has been plundered by him so far, would shake off his feet. We certainly wouldn't shed a tear for him."

It was mainly local SA and SS people who took part in the riots and destruction of the November pogrom of 1938 in Weiden. After the official commemoration of the NSDAP on the "Day of Remembrance of the Movement" in nearby Neustadt, they marched to the synagogue, threw cult objects on the street and tried to set the building on fire. On the initiative of the mayor, however, an arson was refrained from; but the interior was completely destroyed. Other SS members ransacked the homes of Jews. During the night, around 30 to 40 Jews were dragged to the town hall and some were beaten up, and then taken to the regional court prison by the police. From here, 23 Jewish men were deported - via Regensburg - to the Dachau concentration camp. Between 1933 and 1939 about 140 Jewish residents left the city; most managed to emigrate. The 16 Jews who stayed behind in Weiden were initially accommodated in the "Judenhaus" and later deported. After the last transport, the Mayor of Weiden declared his city "Jew-free" in 1942.

According to the Yad Vashem/Jerusalem memorial, 35 Jewish residents who were born in Weiden or had lived in Weiden for a long time were victims of the Nazi tyranny. Immediately after the end of the war, the town of Weiden, near the Flossenbürg concentration camp, was a collection point for liberated prisoners from concentration camps, including numerous Eastern European Jews. Around the turn of the year 1946/1947, around 650 people were counted here. Emigration to Palestine/Israel and the USA caused the number of Jewish residents to decrease significantly. In 1953, the Jews who remained here founded the new "Israelite Community in Weiden". The chairman of the community in Weiden was Hermann Zwi Brenner (1916-2004) for more than four decades.

A commemorative plaque was unveiled in the city's new town hall in 2020, which names 91 Weiden Nazi victims. Two years later, the first so-called "stumbling blocks" were laid in Weiden. At the Jewish cemetery in Weiden, which has been occupied since 1901 and is located north-east of the old town, there are around 80 graves today.

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Jewish cemetery in Weiden (photo A. Koch, 2014, from: wikipedia.org, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Since the existing Jewish cemetery in Weiden would be full in the foreseeable future, the Jewish community in Weiden acquired a 1,500 m² site north of the Weiden forest cemetery in 2011 to build a new burial ground.

In 2005, more than 300 Jews were registered with the Jewish community in Weiden, 280 of them so-called “quota refugees” from the CIS countries.

The community facilities are housed in an inconspicuous building on the Ringstrasse.

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In 2013, a square on Campus-Allee was named after the long-time chairman of the Jewish community in Weiden, Hermann Zwi Brenner (born 1916 in Chrzanow/Krems). Brenner, who survived the Shoah, came to Weiden after the end of the war, where he later ran a textile business. As the founder of the post-war Jewish community, he was its chairman for more than four decades; he died in 2004 at the age of 88.

At the end of 2022, the first so-called "stumbling blocks" are to be laid in Weiden.

Information from: Website "From the history of the Jewish communities in the German-speaking area"