

House Stories

Tanja Riedel first explained how the Jewish community in Ottensoo came into being. The origin of the Jewish communities were the cities. When they were expelled from there - which happened again and again - they looked in other areas. After 1500, the four Jewish communities formed under the protection of the Ganerben vom Rothenberg: Forth, Hüttenbach, Schnaittach and Ottensoos. The heirs granted the Jews protection and protection against taxes and duties.

The first mention of a Jew in Ottensoos named Amsel Jud dates back to 1519. Since then, the number has risen steadily and until the first half of the 19th century, Jews accounted for around 30% of the total population in Ottensoos. The Jewish residents of Ottensoo were well integrated into the life of the village community. In all matters of the community and the common rights of the villagers to the community grounds, the Jews were equal to the Christian Ottensoosern. When these were distributed in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Jewish families also received property in the village. The most important legislation for the Jews was the Jewish Edict, which covered the Jewish population. On the one hand, it was intended to limit the number of Jews and prevent them from spreading to other places. On the other hand, the Jews were to be pushed out of the peddling trade and into areas such as handicrafts and agriculture. The Ottensooser Judenmatricel lists 26 registration offices. More Jews were not allowed to set up their own households. Either young people who wanted to get married and couldn't find a free matriculation place had to live with their parents, move away or even emigrate. They also had to adopt fixed surnames, which they were allowed to choose themselves in Bavaria. Many Ottensoosers chose a classic origin name such as Prager, Hessdörfer or Mannheimer.

From 1860 the Jewish community in Ottensoo steadily lost substance. The matriculation legislation was repealed in 1861, so many moved to the cities. Nuremberg, Fürth and Bamberg were popular cities. In the middle of the 19th century there was a first strong wave of emigration. Jewish community life was still possible in Ottensoos. A religion teacher was employed to take care of the religious tasks of the congregation, who also acted as cantor and slaughterer. Around 1925 there were still 40 people in about ten households in the Jewish community. The leaders of the community were Philipp Sommerich and Max Hessdörfer. Alexander Gutmann worked as a religion teacher, cantor and schochet. There were three other associations: the Charity, the Israelite Women's Association, and the Social and Funeral Association.

Regardless of the Shoah, the Jewish community in Ottensoo would not have had any prospects for the future, because it consisted only of older people and was largely financed by grants from the Nuremberg religious community. Most of the younger Jews had emigrated straight away. In the dark period from 1933 to 1945, the remaining Jewish residents of Ottensoos were expelled. Over 400 years of history had been wiped out.

Jewish citizens were municipal councilors and board members in associations

The Jewish properties were concentrated around the village square, Hans-Pirner-Strasse, Hirschengasse and Bahnhofstrasse. They were in a central location, the center of which was the fortified church of St. Veit. There are a total of 19 properties where it is certain that they are Jewish properties. The Spaeth family was one of the oldest Jewish families in the area.

The family lived on the outskirts of Ottensoos and two large branches of the family provided a broad base. The Späths were active in commerce. The son born in Ottensoos in 1873, the merchant Jakob Späth, lived at the entrance to the town and was elected to the municipal council from 1919 to 1925. He was successful in the hop, cattle and goods trade. Jakob Späth was murdered in the pogrom night on November 10, 1938 in Nuremberg and was buried in the Israelite cemetery in Nuremberg. None of the Spaeths stayed in Ottensoos, they had already left the place in 1934, and some managed to emigrate. Due to the close family relationships with other Jewish families, however, they remained connected to the place. They were related and related by marriage to the Lamms, the Welschs, the Hessdörfers and the Rebitzers.

The Rebitzer family, which also belonged to the oldest and most respected Jewish families in the village, lived in the building of today's town hall and the neighboring property. The slaughterhouse of the Jewish butcher was originally located in the town hall building. Later, the slaughterhouse was the barn, where today the citizens' meeting room is located, and upstairs is the municipal boardroom. The Rebitzers had already left Ottensoos before 1938 and mostly moved to Nuremberg or Weiden. Several members of the family have served on the fire service board over the years. Niem Rebitzer was the treasurer and his brother Theodor was a member of the board. Niem Rebitzer was elected to the municipal council in 1894, 1906 and 1912.

The Prager family is also one of the older and more widespread families. Martin Prager and his two sisters, Cäcilie and Helene, lived in the so-called "Brachershaus", which no longer exists. They moved to Nuremberg in 1939 and had to hand over their valuables. Pragers were hop and cattle dealers. The sisters Cäcilie and Helene ran a haberdashery.

The other descendants of the other Prager branches were no longer in Ottensoos at this time. Hermann Prager was head of the fire brigade around 1890, his distant relative Niem Rebitzer held the position of cashier.

Successful Business People

Some Ottensoo Jews had seen a better living in the hop trade. Louis Rebitzer, Jakob Späth and Martin Prager worked closely together in the hop trade. As the Rebitzer & Späth company, Louis Rebitzer and Jakob Späth had relocated their headquarters to Nuremberg. Louis Rebitzer was a very successful businessman. The Jews from Ottensoos had direct contact with the hop market through their relatives in Nuremberg. Since many of the Ottensoos Jews worked as traders or small craftsmen, the place played an important role for the surrounding villages as a trading center. The mayor described Louis Rebitzer, Jakob Späth and Martin Prager as merchants who run their business "really and efficiently". Only a few years later they were decried as dishonest and lazy.

Also on Hirschengasse was the potter's house of Veit Koppel, a potter who made pots and bowls that were used in many Jewish as well as German households. Veit Koppel moved across the country and sold his products. In Hersbruck he got into a fight with the ox innkeeper and Veit Koppel was stabbed in the street. In the village talk it was said "every misfortune came over the paddock house". Veit Koppel was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Schnaittach. In the funeral speech, Chief Rabbi Neckarsulmer drew a comparison between man and oxen: "What is man, man is nothing, man is nothing at all, when he dies he is buried." But what is the ox? Of that one can use the flesh, the skin, and the baa."

Sense of Community

Contemporary witnesses described the Jewish citizens as great benefactors who supported large families. There was always something left for the little people from the Jews who kept livestock, there was always buttermilk; Families never missed out at the Jewish butcher either, and there were also matzoh for children of Christian families.

The annual fire brigade ball was a big event in Ottensoos. The Jewish citizens were very well represented, also at the 1000-year (1903) local anniversary and the celebrations of the MGV and the Warriors' Association. Jewish festivals were also celebrated extensively. The Feast of Tabernacles (in autumn), the Feast of Purim and the Feast of Passover (also known as Passover, Passover or Pascha) were among the most important festivals in Judaism. At these festivals, the Christians were also allowed to go into the synagogue on the long day, it was a peaceful coexistence.

The Jewish Ottensoosers were considered recognized members of the community, they were community councilors and were elected as club directors. Christians and Jews lived next door to each other. Some Jewish families were wealthy, others barely got by. Christians and Jews lived next door to each other.

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