

The
Werthan
Family

**of Rotenburg an der Fulda
Hesse Kassel**



Compiled by
Ellen Stepak
with the assistance of many others

**Note: this book is not yours to dispose of;
you are only keeping it for future generations**

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**of Rotenburg an der Fulda
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This book is the work of an amateur Jewish genealogist.

I have made every effort to refrain from offending anyone in the book, and have tried to make this work as accurate as possible, stating my doubts in places where I am unsure. Any comments, suggestions, corrections, questions or criticism should be directed to me personally.

The cover photo is of Breitenstrasse, the main street of Rotenburg.

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Dedicated to the memory of those who have gone before
To my beloved mother Lorry, descendant of the Werthan family
And to my three children, Avner, Amir, Raquel and their families

Foreword

Every family's story is unique. We may be part of a pattern, but still we are unique. As to the pattern, at the time our first ancestors emigrated, in the mid-19th century, there was a "wave" of immigration to the United States from Germany. At first our ancestors were very poor. Gradually the standard of living improved. And some of the Werthan descendants have done very well indeed. Along with this improved economic status came improved education, and also migration to other parts of the United States (and Israel). And, inevitably came assimilation, which is part of the pattern of Americanization, and seems impossible to avoid.

In this book, I describe a journey of discovery, from knowing very little about the family, to finding names of members of four more generations of ancestors, as well as filling out branches sideways on the tree. Among the findings are not only vital statistics, but also something about their way of life.

Religiously speaking, everything points to the fact that very early on, our ancestors abandoned tradition. One look, a disappointed look, at the gravestone of my great great grandfather, was enough to tell me that it is not traditional. All it mentions is his name, Wolf Werthan, and the dates of his birth and death (1836-1901—actually he was born in 1835). There was no "son of..." and no place of birth. It is surprising that the family actually used the name Wolf and not William.

In Germany, on the other hand, our family was connected to the synagogue, and later I found that Geisel (Joseph) Werthan, father of Wolf, had been a warden (*shamash* in Hebrew; *synagogendiener* in German) of the synagogue, according to his death records. If we are able to solve the riddle of the origins of the family, it is possible that the first synagogue in the town of Rotenburg an der Fulda was a private one owned by the "Davids" who were ancestors of the Werthan family. Sussman, father of Geisel, was a pious man, according to his tombstone, as was his brother Judeman (Yehuda). In the death record of David son of Judeman, it is inscribed that he is the son of the "highly esteemed" Rabbi Yehuda, but this is not enough proof to determine that he had been a Rabbi. According to the gravestone for Eiseman, another brother of Sussman, he too was a Rabbi.

I am especially grateful to Naama Yashuvi-Hayet for finding me. She is my third cousin once removed, whose family remained in Germany. From her very special family, the Rosenthals, we have a glimpse into what might have been the fate of the rest of our family, had they not emigrated as they did. When we compare the fate of our family in the United States of America to the fate of those who stayed behind in Hesse, we can count our blessings. The Rosenthal family paid an enormous price and lost many close family members in the two World Wars.

The centuries of Jewish and Christian Germans living side by side should never have ended this way.

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Introduction: A Brief History of the Jews of the German States Including some Illustrations from the Werthan Family

Not all of us need reminding, but for those of us who never learned much world history, Germany did not become a unified country until relatively late in history. In 1871 Otto von Bismarck completed the unification of what was until then a collection of independent states or princedoms. Hesse was one of these; and the ancestral towns of the Werthan families were in Hesse, which was part of Prussia. This is why the old American ancestral records often give "country of birth" as Hesse or Prussia. Along with the 1871 unification, the Jews were given equal legal rights in the new constitution, although in some regions, they had already achieved equal rights.

The history of Germany is laden with wars and blood, and the following will of necessity be a very shortened version, highlighting some of the Jewish aspects of this history.

Jews have lived in the area known today as Germany, known by the Jews from ancient times as Ashkenaz, for many years, at least since the early 4th century. In the Middle Ages, three cities in the Rhine region: Mainz, Speier and Worms became famous centers of the Jewish religion and scholarship.

During the Crusades (1096-1349), many Jews were massacred, by Crusaders en route to the Holy Land.

Christians blamed the Jews for the plagues, and many other "crimes", in order to justify slaughtering them, throughout the ages. In the Black Death, between 1346-1351, some 25 million, or approximately one third of the population of Europe, including Jews, of course, perished. The Jews were blamed for this plague and many were murdered. There was a well-known blood libel; Christians believed that Jews took the blood of Christian children for the making of *matzoth*, or unleavened bread for the Passover holiday; so that if a Christian child were to die or to disappear just before Passover, the local Jewish community would be in mortal danger.

In different times and places the leaders protected the Jews, but this was especially in order to benefit from taxing them with special taxes imposed only on Jews. The arbitrary expulsion of Jewish people from their towns did not cease; nor did the accusations of commission of crimes, and executions in punishment for these non-existent crimes.

In the Middle Ages, the Jewish people differed from the other Germans in their language and their manner of dress; this set them apart. They spoke a dialect of German mixed with Slavic and Hebrew, known as Judeo-German, and it was written in the Hebrew script. Books written in this language were primarily religious in nature.

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was an intellectual giant, a philosopher, who sought to change this isolation of the Jews from German society. He hoped that the people would learn German, and therefore be exposed to wider culture and thinking, beyond Judaism. He translated the Torah into German, though in the Hebrew alphabet, and many learned German from this book. Mendelssohn personally had

wide secular knowledge, although he was a Jewish man of faith. However, most of Mendelssohn's own descendants converted to Christianity.

Before the 19th century, most Jews were very poor, and their employment opportunities were extremely limited. Therefore, many eked out their livelihood by dealing in second-hand goods, and peddling their wares from door to door. This petty trade was known in German as a negative form of the Hebrew word *sakhar* (pronounced sakh'ar). In Hebrew *sakhar*, meaning trade, does not have a negative connotation, but in Germany the term was used with derision to describe the Jews. The Germans apparently believed that the term originally meant "underhanded dealings". On the one hand, the Germans spoke against the poor dirty Jews, dealing in *schacher*, as it came to be known in German. On the other hand, they did not want the Jews competing with them in the trades which were regarded more favorably. And Christians who dealt in the same peddling as the Jews did not face the same derision.

The typical peddler would walk from town to town with a very big, heavy sack on his back, Monday through Friday, in all weather conditions. His earnings were meager, and he often had to pay taxes, and to bear the hardship of trying to keep kosher as well. Because of the difficulty of maintaining *kashrut*, generally the diet of these men was greatly limited and lacking in nutritional value. Usually the peddler would return home for Shabbot (the Sabbath). Often in the smaller towns, the local Jews would host an itinerant Jewish peddler or beggar so that he could help them complete a *minyan*, or ten men, needed for the prayer services in the synagogue.

Jews were often banished from the towns they lived in. This happened in the large towns and cities, especially in the 15th and 16th centuries, but it also happened in the small towns, as it did in Rotenburg an der Fulda. The oldest preserved Hessian *schutzbrief* (letter of protection/permit to reside in a town--as stated also on pages 16 and 28 of this work) was issued in 1414 for the Jew Meyer who lived in Rotenburg; then the Jewish inhabitants were expelled at least once before the later *schutzbrief* of 1622. From 1622 onward, there was continual Jewish presence until the Nazi times.

However, in cases in which Jews dealt in buying cattle or other produce from the German peasants for a living, there was ambivalence in this business relationship. When in difficult economic times, the peasants were unable to repay their debts, at times their property was repossessed, and this led in many cases to anti-Semitism (this happened not only in Germany). This of course is a result, among other things, of the limitations on the occupations in which the Jews were allowed to engage. Pawn broking and money lending were regarded with derision, and were out of bounds for Christians, but they fulfilled a need, so they remained among the few livelihoods open to Jews. Jews were not allowed to join any professional guilds.

Only from about 1810 onward were Jews allowed to work in trades such as weaving and shoemaking. This required a three-year apprenticeship, then a period of unpaid work as a journeyman, until the young man was able to return home and actually work in his trade. Therefore, only relatively well-to-do families could support a son through all this time in the first place. Then, after the young man was established in his field of endeavor, the doors to the professional guilds were often closed. In Württemberg, a neighboring state to Hesse, Emily Rose mentions that out of 3000

Jewish men in 1827, only 400 were members of the trades.¹ We know that Geisel (son of the shoemaker Sussman), was accepted to the shoemakers' guild, achieving the title "*Schuhmachemeister*". Then in 1831 he applied for citizenship of Rotenburg, which he needed in order to marry. According to Dr. Heinrich Nuhn, this was a requirement for anyone, not only for Jewish people. As we shall see later in this work, Geisel's father and his grandfather had also held citizenship of Rotenburg. Geisel was not the elder son, which might have made this easier to obtain. He claimed that he was in danger of losing his "wealthy" fiancée, and this may have been true, as Dinchen [or Theresa] may have been from the well-to-do Apfel family, and he did need to have citizenship in order to marry in Rotenburg.

Hence, because they were citizens of Rotenburg, and because they were guild members, we may assume that the Werthan family was indeed of a higher social standing than some families—at least until the time when mass production replaced the craft of shoemaking, and shoemaking as an occupation declined in status.

In the first half of the 19th century, there was much hardship, including periods of great economic turmoil and inflation. According to Emily Rose, many virulently anti-Semitic writings appeared, among other things, blaming the Jews for usurping the livelihood of the other Germans. Beginning in August 1819 in Würzburg, the "hep-hep" riots against the Jews took place; these riots spread to other localities in the German states to and some neighboring countries. This was in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, when economic conditions were poor, and the Jewish people were attempting to achieve equal rights and membership in the guilds. "Hep-hep" has two possible meanings: either *Hierosolyma est perdita* (h.e.p.), a Crusader cry meaning Jerusalem is lost; or more likely, a traditional goat shepherd's cry to the herd.

The 1840s were characterized by famine, bankruptcies, inflation, and the breakdown of law and order. In 1848, the Enlightenment began in France, and crossed the border to the German states. The Jewish population began to be politically active, in all of the political persuasions: in the camp of constitutional monarchists, democratic republicans, and in the social revolutionary movements. The achievements and hopes of 1848 were overturned, but among some of the Jewish population, in retrospect 1848 was viewed favorably, despite widespread anti-Semitism and violent attacks, particularly in Hesse.

In my opinion, the fact that the Jewish population was theoretically granted equal rights, raising hopes of a better future, yet after 1848, these rights were rescinded, must have contributed to the decision to emigrate. The question of how to make a living remained. In addition, in the early 1850s, the farmers experienced poor harvests, and this was the sector of the economy upon which all the rest was dependent. This led to widespread emigration, of both Christians and Jews, especially to the United States. Emily Rose discusses the reasons for emigration, and she states: "The Jews accounted for 2 percent of the total number of emigrants, a figure much higher than their actual percentage of the population, which was less than 1 percent...On a basic level, it was easier for the Jews to leave because their assets, and their emotions, were not tied to family farms."²

¹ Rose, Emilie C., *Portraits of Our Past, Jews of the German Countryside*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2001

² Rose, *ibid*, pp. 210-212

Even though our family was part of a wave of immigration, still proportionately only a small minority of the Jews of Europe did immigrate so early. Many are familiar with the later wave of immigration which began in 1881 and 1882, from the area which was then Russia, and around the turn of the 20th century, became a regular torrent. Many American Jewish families have both German and Eastern European roots.

The letters written back home by the emigrants must also have encouraged the wave of immigration which began at that time. The immigrants could report that in America the level of anti-Semitism, while still present, was much lower, and that Jews were allowed to own land, and to work in any occupation they chose. Nonetheless, life remained difficult, on both sides of the Atlantic.

According to Emily Rose, the actual emigration process itself caused many Jews to abandon their religious traditions. During the journey, the possibility of keeping kosher was limited. People often immigrated to places which did not have an established Jewish community. Even in Chicago, it took years for the community to establish synagogues (the first was in 1847), cemeteries and kosher butcher shops. These three institutions constituted the basic requirements for Jewish communal life. In smallish towns of Indiana and other states of the mid-West, there were once small Jewish communities, which never developed these institutions. Many Jewish immigrants joined the Reform movement, which initially had abandoned much of Jewish religious tradition, but which still enabled affiliation with the Jewish religion. The Jews of my hometown, Huntington, Indiana (16,000 population), occasionally attended the Reform temple of congregation Achduth Vesholom (Unity and Peace), in the city of Fort Wayne, twenty-five miles away, and were buried there in Lindenwood cemetery. Had they remained traditional, residing in such a small town would have been impossible.

Back in Germany, from what I have read, the small town Jews of Hesse enjoyed a relative amount of freedom and integration in the middle and late 19th century, and though anti-Semitism never ceased to exist, they enjoyed fairly good relations with their neighbors. Legally, their situation improved, but in actuality there continued to be many limitations on their integration.

At the beginning of World War I, patriotism in Germany was high, and large numbers of Jews volunteered to fight for their "fatherland". There was generally a feeling that this would bring about their total integration into society at large. Many Jewish soldiers died in the war, and indeed, many veterans considered their participation in this war, even after the defeat, as a source of pride.³ David and Elka Rosenthal nee Werthan lost two sons in this War, Siegfried and Georg. As we know, the fact that one had fought for Germany, and even had won medals for bravery--or one had an immediate family member who had given his life for the homeland--did nothing to save anyone after the Nazis came to power, just fifteen years after the end of World War I. Two grandsons of David and Elka Rosenthal were named Georg Siegfried after their two uncles Georg and Siegfried who had died in World War I. They in turn died in World War II, one as a victim of the Holocaust, the other as a soldier in the British Palestine Brigade.

³ Elon, Amos, *The Pity of it All, A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743-1933*, Picador, A Metropolitan Book, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2003.

According to a paper I have found online at www.yadvashem.org.il, by Menahem Kaufman,⁴ in Hessen there was variation in the progress of anti-Semitism in the Nazi period. The level of persecution differed from town to town, until 1938, when Nazism gained total control. "In most villages...the Jews were 'persuaded' to leave by 1935; in small towns the Jews were forced to leave about one year after the riots of November 1938. But in the traditional Nazi strongholds they were compelled to leave as early as 1934." According to what I have seen among the Werthans in the Nazi period, some of them left Germany, either for the Netherlands or for the New World. It is my impression that some young small-town Jews had moved to cities, probably seeking educational and employment opportunities a village could not offer, even before the Nazi period.

Among the Jews who remained in Germany following the wave of immigration of the mid-19th century, there was often a feeling of being "more German than the Germans". There was a false sense of acceptance, and a tendency towards assimilation, to the point where many no longer practiced their religion, and many others converted to Christianity. This too did not prevent their murder in the Holocaust, in accordance with the Nazi racial laws.

⁴ Kaufman, Menahem, "The Daily Life of the Village and Country Jews in Hessen from Hitler's Ascent to Power to November 1938", *Yad Vashem Studies* XXII, (Jerusalem 1992), pp. 147-159.

Maps and an Old Etching of Rotenburg an der Fulda



Map showing the German states, which still exist as part of the German Federation

Map courtesy of www.theodora.com/maps, used with permission

Rotenburg is in northeastern Hesse, near the border with Thuringia



Schematic map of the region of Hesse, showing ancestral towns
 Rotenburg an der Fulda, Bebra, Hofgeismar
 Other ancestral villages are not indicated on the map.

Below is most of an etching of Rotenburg an der Fulda from 1646



Starting Point: Of Three Jewish Families of Nashville

Sigmund Godhelp	Wolf Werthan	Meier Werthan
Married 5/19/1870	Married 7/29/1866	Married 9/10/1873
Bertha Liebman	Henrietta Godhelp	Minnie Liebman

The above is quite complicated because 6 people from only 3 families got married! Wolf and Meier were brothers. Minnie and Bertha were sisters. Sigmund and Henrietta were brother and sister.

Sigmund arrived from Hesse, Germany in 1853. Enlisted in the Confederate Army. Was taken prisoner at the Battle of Chattanooga.

I remember Henrietta Godhelp Werthan. I was born in 1917. In the early 1920s, she sat near the stove in the house on Armitage Avenue, Chicago, drinking coffee all day. I thought she was a witch, so I would run from the kitchen + pass her by as fast as I could run. Henrietta's daughter was Emma Werthan who married Nathan Feldman. They were my grandfather and grandmother whom I knew well.

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This is even more complicated than anyone imagined at the time my uncle Earl visited in Nashville and wrote the above. As I have discovered, Sigmund and Henrietta Godhelp (Gotthelf) were first cousins of Wolf and Meier Werthan.

The above note, along with the passage below, from a book by Fedora Frank of Nashville, *Beginnings on Market Street: Nashville and her Jewry, 1861-1901*, were among the first "pieces of evidence" I had regarding my two families. My Uncle Earl Brenn was in Nashville, Tennessee, probably for a convention, and went knocking on the door, so to speak, at Werthan Industries. He presented himself as a cousin, I think to Albert Werthan, and received the above information, and the passage below on the Werthan family. For years, my research began with this description of the three families had who married among each other; luckily, it includes much information. Thanks to this information, I was able to order the Confederate States Army file from NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) for Sigmund Godhelp. Since it mentions him taking the oath of allegiance to the US, after being taken prisoner at Chattanooga, I wonder whether there isn't an original Confederate file as well. Looking at census records and in Nashville City Directories on microfilm, I was able to track the family for a few years, until my great great grandparents left Nashville with their children for Chicago, around 1871. It is a pretty safe assumption that there were economic considerations for the move.

Excerpt from *Beginnings on Market Street**:

"Werthan-Godhelp Family. Meier Werthan came to Nashville in the late 1860s. For several years his two brothers Wolf and Levi lived in Nashville, but left in the early 1870s. Meier served as President of B'nai B'rith, president of Keshet Shel Barzel and as warden, secretary and treasurer of the Vine Street Temple. He was married to Minnie Liebman Sept. 10, 1873. Minnie's sister Bertha was married to Sigmund Godhelp May 19, 1870, and Meier's brother, Wolf was married to Godhelp's sister Henrietta on July 29, 1866. Godhelp had arrived in Baltimore from his native Hesse

*All of the earliest Werthan and Godhelp addresses from the Nashville City Directories of the 1860s are on Market Street; later, some are on Summer Street.

with his brother Jacob in 1853. He enlisted in the Confederate Army and served in Co. A, 19th Tennessee Infantry and was taken prisoner at Battle of Chattanooga and later released. The Godhelp-Werthan business of second-hand and used materials was known as S. Godhelp and Co. until 1895 when Godhelp died. It then became M. Werthan and Co. and was the forerunner of the present-day large industrial plant, Werthan Industries. Godhelp was also active in the Vine Street Temple, B'nai B'rith and was president of Free Sons of Israel. *Population Schedule*, 1870, 1880; *N.B.D.*, 1865-1901: *Davidson County Circuit Court Minutes*, Book Z, Oct. 1864 for Godhelp's citizenship; *C.S.R.C.S.T.*, reel 197 for Godhelp's war records; *Davidson County Marriage Records* for all three marriages mentioned above; obit Meier N.T., Sept. 3, 1914; interview with Alma Werthan Frank."⁵

⁵Frank, Fedora, *Beginnings on Market Street: Nashville and her Jewry, 1861-1901*, Nashville, TN, USA, 1976, page 203

*All of the early addresses from the 1860s and 1870s in the Nashville City Directories are on Market Street.

Progress on Researching My German Ancestry

Since beginning researching my ancestry in 1995, I have learned a great deal, but it has been a lengthy process. There have been long periods of frustration. In particular, I have been successful in researching my Lithuanian family, but that took a long time, after years of not finding my families on any lists from the town they had lived in before immigrating, Kupishok/Kupiskis. I should mention that my ancestors came from a variety of places: Germany, Kovno Guberniya in Lithuania; Lodz, Poland; Volhynia (Southern Ukraine near Kremenz); and also Pinsk, Belarus. Since my ancestors from Germany arrived in the United States in the 1850s and 1860s, there has been a lot of material to research in the US. One ancestor served in the Confederate Army. Another served in the Indian Wars. The first place my family resided for any length of time was Nashville, Tennessee, where my two families, Werthan and Gotthelf/Godhelp went into business together. In the above photocopied page, from a manuscript by Fedora Frank, from the Archives of the Jewish Federation of Nashville, is the statement, "It is quite possible that the Werthan-Godhelp association had its beginning with the marriage of Meir's brother, Wolf, to Henrietta Godhelp on July 29, 1866."

However, until recently, I had made no progress whatsoever on researching my German family beyond the United States, because I did not know where they came from. The family only remembered "Hesse." Any records I came across, such as marriage records and US census records, simply said Hesse or Prussia. In the series of books *Germans to America*, it was the same story, with one exception: by my great great grandmother Henrietta's name was a code for the town Hofgeismar. But I had read that these books are not always reliable, and wanted more documentation before trying to research this town.

So it became obvious that my next step should be to find microfilms of the original ship manifests, in the hope that the town names were registered there. However, here in Israel that was a problem. It was time to plan a trip to Salt Lake City, to break down the barriers to my making progress on my German families. On October 31st, 2002, I joined the group organized by Avotaynu, to spend an intensive week of genealogy in Salt Lake City.

Our hotel was just a "skip and a jump" from the Family History Library (FHL), which is open most days from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. So we had long hours to work on our family research. However, I wasted almost half a day getting orientated, and another day in bed with a virus. Finally, I looked up and found the microfilmed ship manifests of my Gotthelf ancestors, and on both my great great grandmother Henriette's, and her brother Sigmund's manifests, the town name Hofgeismar appeared. Next, I looked at the Hamburg Lists to find the manifest for Meyer, brother of my great great grandfather, Wolf Werthan. There I found Rotenburg, Cur Hesse. That meant nothing to me; in an atlas there were twelve German Rotenburgs of various spellings, and I went to sleep that night wondering if I'd ever find out the right town, even though I now had a name. However, at the FHL they have people from Germany who are able to assist in finding these places, and the next morning, searching old map books, one researcher did find the right Rotenburg, on the Fulda River. Looking at the maps, I could see that these two towns, Hofgeismar and Rotenburg, were not very far from each other. But neither were they very close.

Then I looked up microfilms for Hofgeismar. Luckily there were just two separate microfilms for the Jewish community of Hofgeismar, containing marriage and death records. That entire day I spent on reading the old German records. I had approached this task with a sense of trepidation: was I up to this? Luckily, the Mormons have prepared some aids to understanding the old records. One of them helped to identify the old German handwriting. I was also helped by the fact that the name Gotthelf rather stood out on a page, because of the double "t" in the middle of it. Every time I found a Gotthelf record, I walked over to the photo machines to make myself a copy. There were quite a few of these records. Often I stopped by the main desk to get an explanation of the documents, and on the back of the photocopies, I made notes, so that I could straighten things out later. At the end of the day, I drew a family tree from what I had found. My earliest ancestors were my great great great great grandparents, Jacob and Roschen (nee Heskell) Gotthelf. Jacob died in 1837 at age 81. So that took me back to 1756. He also did me a favor; on a document he witnessed in 1809, he signed his name in Hebrew, "Jacob bar Itzig" (see page 49). So that took me back to around 1730(!) Imagine my excitement. There was only one problem: although there was only one Gotthelf family in these records, there was no clinching tie to the immigrants to America, who left as single people, and therefore did not appear in the marriage or death records at the FHL. The only Gotthelfs having children in the appropriate years were Itzig and Roschen, so I naturally assumed that they were the parents of Henriette. There was another surprise in these documents: Roschen Gotthelf wife of Itzig was the daughter of Sussmann Werthan of Rotenburg!

I did not find additional records to research the Werthan family.

Back in Israel, I joined the GerSIG (German Special Interest Group) Discussion Group at JewishGen, and wrote them an introductory letter, detailing my German families, and what I was looking for. There were a few responses, one of them particularly helpful, from Wolfgang Fritzsche, who does research in Germany. He reminded me that there are German records in the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem. I had planned to go there, but as usual, it took me time to actually go to the archives for the first time. Finally, I had plans to attend a meeting of the Israel Genealogical Society in Jerusalem, and decided to make this a "Jerusalem day."

The archives are [were—these were temporary premises] in new premises, across Jabotinsky Street from the Van Leer Institute. At the archives they explained to us first-timers how things work, and brought us records. I requested all of the vital records they have for Rotenburg an der Fulda and Hofgeismar. These came in the form of tiny books with photos of records as pages. The fine handwriting on most of them requires working with a magnifying glass, and even then, much of what is written is difficult or impossible to read. Moreover, it is not possible to make copies of these records. Nonetheless, I was able to read many of them, and luckily, the years I was most interested in were more legible than some. I spent most of the time with the book of births in Rotenburg (there were no other vital records for Rotenburg). I took notes, and reckoned that I'd probably been able to go back to around 1800 on the Werthan family. Then I turned to the book of births in Hofgeismar. This was even more difficult to read, but I was determined. The three Gotthelf siblings who immigrated to the United States were there, but disguised. Jacob was Jacob, of course, but Henriette was Jette (Yetta), and Sigmund was Sussmann. All were children of Itzig and Roschen Gotthelf nee Werthan.

The following day I found time to record my findings on the Werthan family. And I looked again at the emails from Wolfgang Fritzsche. Slowly things unfolded. Suddenly I realized that Henriette Gotthelf and Wolf Werthan, my great great grandparents, were first cousins; his father Geisel was the brother of her mother Roschen. And finally I realized that regarding the Werthan family, like the Gotthelf family, I was able to go back to ca. 1730, to my great great great great grandfather, Lucas Sussmann (Apfel).

I hope this isn't the end of the road, and that there are other possibilities to continue researching these families in the early days; it appears, however, that the next steps will require the services of a professional genealogist.* Personally, however, it has been particularly satisfying accomplishing so much of the work on my own.

The above article was published both in *Sharsheret Hadorot*, volume 17, #2, 2003, pp. xv-xvi, the publication of the Israel Genealogical Society, and in *Avotaynu*.

*It has since come to my attention that instead of a professional genealogist, we must rely upon the chance that Dr. Nuhn or another researcher will happen upon a record in which an ancestor is recorded.

Addition to the above: while in Salt Lake City, at the time of identifying the name of the ancestral town of Rotenburg, the kind worker there, who had helped me find the town, also looked up the city on the Internet, and gave me the email address for Rotenburg. She noted that there was a booklet mentioned at the website about the Jewish community of the town. So later I wrote to the municipality, and received a response from Dr. Heinrich Nuhn. There will be more about this later in this work (see page 92).

Note: while writing this book, a **new theory** has come to the forefront: it is compelling to consider that Geisel had only two wives, not three as I had previously thought. This theory is supported by the following facts: there is no record of the death of Dinchen Werthan nee Apfel; there is no known record of a marriage to either Dinchen or Theresa; there is no one in later generations named Dina in this branch of the family. In addition, in Wulf's birth registry (1836) his mother's name is difficult to decipher. On the other hand, in this branch of the family one does find the name Theresa. So it is likely that Geisel's first wife was named Theresa, not Dinchen, and that there was no Dinchen. In all the early birth records for this family, we find the mother of Geisel's children with the surname Apfel, born in 1806. Assuming that the mother of these children was one and the same, then Wulf/Wolf and Lucas were full brothers, rather than half-brothers, as I'd thought.

Sometimes It *Is* Written in Stone And Ramblings on Rotenburg

In my wildest genealogical imaginings, I did not think I would find myself in a town of my ancestors that looks like a page from a fairy tale. After visiting in Kupishok, Lithuania, and in Pinsk and Posenitz, Belarus, I knew where my ancestors had lived: in little wooden, very basic homes. Upon arrival in the Markt Square of Rotenburg an der Fulda, I found myself being drawn into a story which was going to be different in many ways.



Luftkurort Rotenburg a. d. Fulda. Marktplatz mit Rathaus

The building barely seen to the left and behind the town hall
was once a Werthan residence
old photo from a set of Rotenburg 10 photos
published by Karl Wilhelm, Luftkurort Rotenburg a.d. Fulda

Looking around the square, as we were waiting to meet our host, Dr. Heinrich Nuhn, we were surrounded by pretty half-timbered homes, dating from the 17th century. The old church and the town hall broke this pattern, and they were old and beautiful as well. Later I learned that some of my ancestors may have resided just off this very square.

In my previous article, "Progress in Researching my German Ancestry" (*Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.17 No.2), I had no idea how much further along I would be before the year ended. Meanwhile, in August 2003, I made the pilgrimage to my ancestors' homes in Hesse-Kassel. It has been an overwhelming experience in many ways. Though I cannot forget that this is Germany, my own close ancestors left between 140 and 150 years ago, well before Hitler was born.

My family, the Werthans, was the latest in my attempt to research my ancestors, but they soon became the most thoroughly researched of them all.

Part of the detective work of compiling a family tree leads to assumptions and therefore, at times, mistakes. Personally, I do not like making assumptions and try very hard to discover the facts and prove them. With regard to my main family in Hesse, the Werthans, I have long lived with the assumption that they were the only Jewish Werthan family in the world. Along with this supposition goes the premise that if this is so, then all of the Werthans are related. So I look for the facts that prove the premise. And when they appear, sometimes I feel like dancing.

In November 2002, I was finally able to establish that Rotenburg is the town of my family's origin, as described in the aforementioned article. My serious Werthan research began with a list of Jewish residents of Rotenburg an der Fulda from 1808. This is a surname adoption list. There are five separate family units on this list. Three of them were especially interesting to me: Sussman David (born in 1762), Judemann David (born in 1768) and Eisermann (or Eisemann) David. Sussman David was my direct ancestor. I *wanted* to believe that they were all brothers, and sons of David. Logic led me to believe that, until surnames were adopted in Germany, use of the father's name was a way of identifying people. But as I have said, nothing is to be taken for granted. When I found out their birth dates, it appeared that Eisermann was born 20 years later than the others; most likely he was probably not their brother. Later, working on the family tree, I came upon a marriage record, which stated that Eisemann David was born in 1763, not 1783, and I "pounced" on that date as proof enough for me. As for the David part, we were lucky to find the graves of several important ancestors intact. On the gravestone of Judemann David, the name is inscribed in Hebrew, Yehuda son of David. Likewise, on the gravestone for Sussman David, who died in 1828, my 4th great grandfather, the name is Zisman son of David. So David was my 5th great grandfather!

A similar thing occurred in the Hofgeismar cemetery, which is about an hour and a half drive from Rotenburg an der Fulda. There was a grave for Reisgen (Werthan) wife of Itzig Gotthelf, and I was ecstatic on finding it. But wait a minute: who is this Meshulam, her father? So, though once again, logic said this was my 3th great grandmother's gravestone, I refused to put it in the definite category, until later that day, when Dr. Heinrich Nuhn, who so kindly guided me to the cemetery, showed me another epitaph, which said "Meshulam known as Sussman." Only then did I allow myself to truly rejoice at the find.

These finds remind me, if I needed reminding, that if the graves of our ancestors in other places had survived, genealogy would be much simpler.

It is admittedly especially true in tracing German ancestry that the packages can be tied so neatly with a bow, so to speak. In much of genealogy, we are obliged to make assumptions....

Ramblings in Rotenburg

Like most of us, it is not just the dry facts which intrigue me. I wish I could go back in time and "visit" for a while.

Nonetheless, some things we can learn from the family tree. My 3rd great grandfather, Geisel (Yosef) Werthan, lost two of his wives in childbirth. He did not "skip a beat," however, in remarrying and having more children with the next wife. I think the fact that he was left with small children to raise, must have made this more acceptable. The third wedding was held in a neighboring town, though I do not know whether this is significant. Repeatedly, I found cases where a family which had ten children, typically ended up with five grown to a marriageable age, and these were often the children of two different mothers.

We know that these things happened, but somehow, when you are entering the data into a database of your own ancestors, these facts seem more real. When you think about it, these were not ancient times, but just a blip ago in history. We, and especially women, have come a very long way....

Regarding how Jews found their marriage partners, on my family tree are partners from within the extended family, including first cousins. There are cases of sets of sisters marrying sets of brothers. There are cases of marriage connections between two families over a couple generations. There are also brides, especially, from many villages in the vicinity. It is possible that these marriages were arranged by the parents of the bride and groom, employing a *shadchan*, or marriage broker, who would have been entitled to approximately 10% of the dowry. To quote Dr. Nuhn, the *shadchan* "provided all sorts of information on the economic, social, religious, etc., background of the families, and details about individual features and character traits of the candidates." Dr. Nuhn goes on to say that very often the fathers would arrange the weddings of their children, even those arranged without the services of a *shadchan*, and that "the young people were expected to accept their fathers' choice. Pre-arranged marriages were as normal as anything up to the late 19th century."

Another general finding is the age at marriage. These people did not usually marry until well into their twenties, and occasionally even their early thirties, in contrast to the younger brides and grooms found in Lithuania.

Dr. Nuhn showed me advertisements from local papers, placed by members of the Werthan family and others, dating from the 1860s. Today we take this for granted. But when Leopold Alexander, of Rotenburg, advertised, "bathe at home," with a drawing of a bathtub with heated water, the competition called this "unfair business practice." These people were just a bit ahead of their time, in more ways than one.

If one wanted to become a citizen of Rotenburg, during the 19th century, he had to apply for it, and this was expensive. Most families, if they were able to become citizens, were entitled to bestow this status only on the elder son. Citizenship brought privileges to the bearer, such as the right to communal wood for fuel, and the right to be taken care of in old age. This was a kind of insurance policy for the well-to-do.

According to Dr. Nuhn, one of the first Jews to be allowed to reside in Rotenburg, after a break of fifty years, was David, who arrived in 1622; there is a document testifying to this event, which entitled two men and their families, Levi and David, to live in the town, providing they commit to the following: keep the municipal toilets clean, lend the mayor a horse, and pay double taxes. Since my family tree has many Davids on it, and they were a prominent family, it would be tempting to reach the conclusion that this was my family. But I must hold off, until and unless I am able to bridge the gap between 1622 and ca. 1735, when David father of Sussman, Eisemann and Judemann, was born.

It has been surprising to me to discover the stability of residence in Rotenburg - after researching another of my families, the Klotzes of Lithuania, and finding them in one town in that year, but a few years later somewhere else, and each sibling in my great grandparents' generation living in a different town. Assuming the family did arrive in Rotenburg in the year 1622, this means that, until family members left for America in the 1850s and 1860s, they lived in the same town, often in the same house, generation after generation.

One of the things our ancestors apparently lived by was "rules are meant to be broken." Although according to law, Jews were not allowed to live within eyesight of a church, there was a Werthan home across the street from the municipality building, well within sight of the church in the market square. When the private synagogue, which was the only synagogue in Rotenburg, owned by someone named David, or son of David, became a cause of conflict in the community, the time had come to build a new one. Construction was begun on this large synagogue in 1738, but without a building permit. A large fine was imposed upon the community, to be paid over 20 years, but somehow the community avoided paying for the last few years.

In summary, this has been a fascinating and educational chapter in my family's genealogy. I doubt it gets much better than this.

The above article was published in *Sharsheret Hadorot*, volume 19 #2, 2004, pp. xxiv-xxvi.

As an addition to the above article, as mentioned in the introduction to the current work, I would like to add that the very first Jew known to reside in Rotenburg was named Meyer, and he came from Frankfurt. There is a *schutzbrief* (permit to reside) from 1414 for this Meyer in the Marburg State Archives. Later the Jews were expelled from the town, but it is possible that the descendants of Meyer remained in the vicinity, and that later some of them returned to Rotenburg (this happened at times). His is the oldest known *schutzbrief* of Jews in Hessen.

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The Singer Manufacturing Company New-York

(die grösste aller bis jetzt existirenden Näh-Maschinenfabriken.)

Gute Werke des Wirt-Verkauf meiner Original-Singer-Maschinen für
Einzelne und Einzelne

Herrn Joseph Werthan in Rotenburg.

Herr **Joseph Werthan** wird seit ein Jahr der Original-Singer-Näh-
Maschinen haben und dieselben zu den neuen Verbesserungen unter Garantie ver-
kaufen.

Alle übrigen am Platze vorhandenen Singer-Maschinen sind nachgekauft und
auch nicht annähernd mit dem Original zu vergleichen.

Bremen, im September 1871.

G. Neidlinger.

General-Agent der Singer-Manufacturing-Company New-York.

Beygeordnet auf Obenstehende ist die Singer-Original-Maschinen sind die besten
und grössten Näh-Maschinen im Haushalte und für Handwerker. Die ersten
Muster auf den letzten Jahren verbesserten Verbesserungen in Rotenburg 1869 und
Gefell 1870 von allen 48 Verbesserungen des Wirt-Verkauf nur allein und keine andere
ist im Jahre 1870 noch vorhanden. Die ersten 40,000 Stück sind, als bei jeder einer
anderen Näh-Maschinen.

Es dürfte nicht den Zweck dienen, bei der neuen Familien-Maschine ist eine
große Befriedigung für den Haushalt, ist die Singer-Manufacturing-Maschine für
Handwerker und Handwerker.

Vollständige Garantie. **Unterricht unentgeltlich.**

Joseph Werthan, David Sohn.

Haupt-Agent der Singer-Original-Maschinen für Rotenburg und Umgebung.

Die besten Maschinen,
1. für den Haushalt,
2. für den Handel und den Handel,
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100. für den Handel und den Handel,

A notice in the local newspaper about Joseph Werthan becoming an agent for the Singer sewing machine company
This same Joseph son of David Werthan
was a member of the local parliament in the late 19th century



An old post card photo of Brotgasse,
the street where Sussman Werthan and his family lived
In the center right is the former Jewish school, the building with two doors.
This building is directly across from the former Werthan home at 22 Brotgasse.

Surname Adoption

Most of the Jews initially did not have surnames. In the German states, the name of the father was often used essentially as a surname, so that if I found the name Sussman David in an early record, I could confirm that he was Sussman son of David. This was verified by the epitaphs in the Rotenburg and Hofgeismar cemeteries, and by documents.

Generally speaking, with the exception of well-to-do families, notably the Rothschild family, Jews did not have surnames until required to do so by law, under the French occupation during Napoleonic times. In Rotenburg, this occurred in 1808.

The name Werthan has no meaning, according to Heinrich Nuhn. It is just a made-up name, and therefore cannot be explained as coming from an ancestral town or a profession, as many Jewish surnames were. According to Heinrich, it is possible that the name was intended to be Wertheim, and something happened during the registration of the name; for instance, a French clerk would have pronounced the name Wertheim to sound like Werthan. Werthan in German is pronounced Vehrt'han. There were a few other Werthan families in Germany, and also Alsace, but not many. Nonetheless, we can be grateful for having such an uncommon name to research.

The name Gotthelf (G-d helps) is German. It is equivalent to the Hebrew name Eliezer, according to the Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv. The name Gotthelf may be found in different places and also among non-Jews, and once again, it is impossible to determine why they chose this name. There are even Gotthelfs in nearby towns, some spelled Gotthelft, but because the personal names are all different, I have no cause to conclude that there is a relation between these Gotthelfs.

There were rules about the names Jews took. For instance, they were not supposed to take names used by Christians. According to Emily Rose in her book, *Portraits of Our Past*, this was an unwritten law. Also, they were not supposed to take the name of the father as a surname. Emily Rose also writes that the county needed to approve the new surnames, and that new and old surnames were subsequently published in official gazettes. (*Portraits*, pages 90-91)

Prior to the requirement of surname adoption, signatures on documents were often in Hebrew, and that is how I discovered the name of my 5X great grandfather Itzig/Yitzhak Gotthelf in Hofgeismar, as mentioned above. Following surname adoption, there was a requirement to sign in German only.

There was yet another Werthan family in Rotenburg an der Fulda. Members of this family remained in Rotenburg, and some fled to the United States just before the Holocaust. However, apparently there is no connection to our family, and we don't know how they came to have the same last name. The last *shamash* (warden) of the Rotenburg synagogue was named Isak Werthan, and he died in 1938, second to last to be buried in the local Jewish cemetery. According to Dr. Nuhn, Isak was not related to our ancestors. As the warden of the synagogue, he had lived in the school building, right in front of the synagogue, at 19 Brotgasse. There is more about this family in the chapter on Werthans in the Holocaust (Shoah).

Partial List of the Jewish Population
of Rotenburg/Fulda 1808 (Name Adoption)
With additions of later data for some individuals

Surname	Given name	Status	Date/birth	Date/death	Grave #
Werthan	Elckel	Widow of David Salomon	3.8.1738		
	(Gumpel) Marcus David	Son	10.8.1775		
Werthan	Susmann David	Head of Household	7.9.1762	4.11.1828	166
	Elke	Wife; daughter of Lucas Susmann [Apfel]; from Bebra	20.3.1766		
	Lucas	Son; merchant, <i>shamash</i> (warden)	8.4.1794	27.12.1859	
	Gumpel	Son	21.4?.1796	17.8.1866	
	Reisgen/Roschen	Daughter; married Itzig Gotthelf, died Hofgeismar	4.3.1802	1879	Hofg. 44
	Geisel	Son, shoemaker; <i>synagogendiener</i> (<i>shamash</i> , warden)	13.6.1806	10.1.1888	232
	Salomon	Son	20.4.1808		
Werthan	Eisermann David (Isaak)	Head of Household Rabbi, mohel	3.6.1763	4.12.1843	168
	Beile	Wife; Daughter of Susmann Katz; from Wanfried	1772		
	David	Son, shoemaker	8.5.1799		
	Mundel	Son	4.11.1802		
	Sussmann (Meschullam)	Son, mohel	4.8.1806	21 10 1862	72
Werthan	Judemann David (Yehuda)	Head of Household Rabbi, merchant	12.5.1768	25 11 1847	53
	Judel (Gitel)	Wife; Hess... from Wanfried	8.6.1776	24.3.1864	3
	Reichel	Daughter	4.5.1804	26 9 1888	
	David	Son of <i>hochgeschätzten</i> (highly esteemed) Rabbi	24.8.1806	18.5.1881	84
Werthan	Meyer Cappel	Deceased			
	Daubgen	Wife; daughter of Isaak Levi from Eschwege	8.7.1760		
	Heineman	Son	7.6.1784		
	Levi/Leib	Son	10.3.1786		
	Jacob	Son	17.7.1789		
	Besgen	Daughter	3.6.1792		
	Leyser	Son	12.6.1794		
	Fromet	Daughter	18.3.1796		
	Arnd	Son	15.9.1797		
	Hannah	Daughter	20.9.1799		

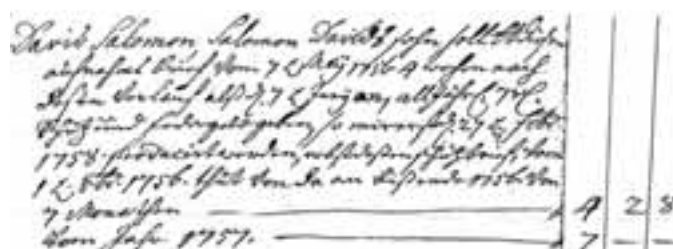
How I Have Deduced Our Early Ancestor Named Salomon

In the above Name Adoption List from 1808, received from Wolfgang Fritzsche, and embellished upon by Dr. Nuhn and myself, the families are grouped by what looks like and is a logical order. There are five family groupings. Three of the Heads of Household I know as sons of David, who took the name Werthan: Sussman (Meschulam) David, Eiserman (Eiseman/Yitzhak/Isaac) David and Judeman (Yehuda) David. The families had other children after 1808, but I have not added them to the list, which in this respect is faithful to the original.

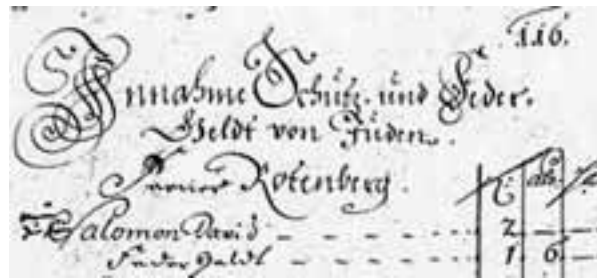
The members of the last Werthan family, of the deceased Meyer Cappel, disappeared from Rotenburg, and I have not found them in later records, nor have I been able to trace them in the United States, although theoretically they may have gone there. Also notable is the fact that the given names of this family differ from those of the other families, although the names Leyser, Meyer and Levi/Leib may be found in both families. Logically, they might have been related to our family, but there is not enough to go on, in order to determine a relationship.

So I am left with three families I can identify, and also the first group, which includes Elckel, widow of David Salomon, and Gumpel/Marcus David. It may be a leap of faith, but my guess is that Gumpel, brother of the other three, for whatever reason, did not marry and was living with his mother. Note that he too had the second name David, like the others, which means that his father was also named David. Elckel, then, must be the mother of all four brothers, and her deceased husband was David son of Salomon. We have no vital statistics about David or Salomon, but by deduction, David would have been born about 1730, and his father Salomon more or less twenty-five years before then. This is as far back as we are able to go in time, unless *by some miracle* another document shows up, perhaps a court document, as happened in the case of Hofgeismar, where I found the signature in Hebrew of an ancestor, as Yaakov son of Itzig, witness on a document (see page 49).

Now this chapter could be rewritten, as the hoped-for "miracle" did indeed happen recently. Dr. Heinrich Nuhn found tax documents in the Marburg archives confirming the existence of Salomon. He was known as Salomon David, and David Salomon was his son. In 1756 David Salomon son of Salomon David received citizenship of Rotenburg. On the 20th of May 1787 David died. There is an earlier tax document from 1722, which records that Salomon David paid taxes as a citizen of Rotenburg. He had to be at least 25 to be a citizen, which places his birth in the 1690s. This is exciting news, for both reasons: (1) confirmation of Salomon's existence; (2) confirmation that they had citizenship of Rotenburg. So now it's time to rewrite my hypothesis: Salomon David may have been the son of a man named David.



This is the registration of David Salomon's citizenship in 1756



This is the earliest known document of a member of the family.
 It is the beginning of a ledger of residents of Rotenburg
 paying protection money for citizenship in the year 1722.
 First on the list is Salomon David.



Brückengasse, a side street off the main street of Rotenburg
 Part of an old print made by Paul Scheffer, Cassel fec.
 Wisemüller, Rotenburg a. F., Verlag
 printed by the Gotthelft Brothers of Cassel (not dated)
 The first house on the right after the bridge was the Sussman Eiseman Werthan home.

Family Graves in the Rotenburg Jewish Cemetery



Gravestone of Sussman David (Werthan)
who died in Rotenburg
1763-1828

Here lies
A man who walked all his days
In the ways of honesty[.] His actions were
with total faith[.] He ate
of the fruits of his labor and was of the most attentive
to the voice of ... and all ... he
stood steadfast in his righteousness until he was gathered
and his name was Zussman
son of David and...
He died on 27 Heshvan 5589 (4 November 1828)

[The dots denote religious terms I was unable to translate.]



Gravestone of Geisel (Joseph) Werthan son of Sussman
Who died in Rotenburg in 1888
1806-1888

Here Lies
Joseph known as Geisel Werthan
Man of faith and G-d-fearing
Who walked all his days in the ways of the righteous
And faithfully carried out public service
He died in good name and old age
On 25 Tevet 5649
May his soul be bound in the knot of life



Gravestone of Deina nee Kaiser, third wife of
Geisel (Yosef) Werthan
1808-1854

Here lies
Dina wife of Yosef known as Geisel
WERTHAN
The woman is praised and dear
The crown of her husband[,] the glory of her sons
Blessed with every honest measure
She did charitable acts all her days
Died on Sunday 13 Kislev
5614
May her soul be bound in the knot of life



The gravestone of Eiseman/Eiserman Werthan
son of Elckel and David Salomon
brother of Sussman and Judeman
1765-1843

Here lies
The glorious Biblical and Rabbinical
in Torah and G-d-fearing Eiseman
and... who in his younger years taught
in the yeshiva and learned from ...
... until the day of his death
Also walked in
to be a *mohel** to the sons
of Bnei Israel under the wings
of the Divine Presence will his soul be
bound in the knot of life with...
His soul ... died and was buried

[*A mohel is a man who performs the brit or bris {circumcision} on the eighth day after the birth of a son. According to his gravestone, he was also a Rabbi.]



The gravestone of Judeman son of Elckel and David
(and brother of Sussman and Judeman)
1768-1847

Here lies
The man
who was honest who walked in the ways of good
as a righteous man and honest in ... in deed
his hands ... in this world and because of
the good things he did his soul ... to heaven
of good name he was...Yehuda son of David
(the rest is illegible)

Notes from a Meeting with Dr. Heinrich Nuhn in Tel Aviv

Last night, on October 19th, 2003, I went to the Mercure Marina hotel in Tel Aviv, where Heinrich's group is staying on their first night in TA. At nine o'clock, I went up to the restaurant where they had just had dinner, and met with Heiner and Patra, who he introduced as his replacement when he will be unable to continue his work on Jewish history.

We spent most of the evening in the lobby. At first we spoke in general terms. Heinrich presented me with his booklet, the two copies I'd requested, and the latest version of his CD. He refused to let me pay for them. He mentioned that there is now some English on the website, only general material, but it is a start. He gave me a photocopy of the local newspaper article about our visit to Rotenburg. And he showed me a new article, from yesterday morning, actually, entitled "I Just Can't Stop Doing It"; meaning that he cannot stop dealing with Jewish history.

We discussed Jewish homes in Rotenburg, then moved on to what I had been most anxious to discuss, pages in Old German about Geisel Werthan. One document interested me in particular. It mentioned early dates, yet I was fairly sure that it was connected to Geisel. I had thought that the documents dealt with a request for citizenship, but he said that at least some of them deal with his attempt to join a guild. This may have also been connected to his desire to receive citizenship in Rotenburg.

The interesting document was a Letter of Complaint by a citizen of Rotenburg, written after Geisel's application was denied, and he had contested the decision. The writer begins by mentioning the first Jews of the town, hence the early dates of 1622 and 1633. It is interesting that all of the given names which he mentions may be found on our family tree. These are David, Levi, Sussman and Salomon. The document begins as follows:

January 17, 1622
The Jew, David
Levi of Mecklar
was accepted here and then
on October 13, 1633...
the Jews David,
Levi...Saul (Salomon)
and Sussman.

This document goes on to mention the conditions under which the Jews were allowed to reside in Rotenburg. The *burgermeister* (mayor) and town council decided they were to:

1. pay a contribution and tax
2. pay double taxes for their houses
3. be exempt from public service, such as guard duty. This was considered a privilege, but Jews were not considered trustworthy.
4. refrain from hosting strange Jews. Jews would not be allowed to offer hospitality to any other (non-resident) Jews without permission of the authorities.

These people have become numerous and now they are part of the local population. Now they live from *schachar*, a German word obviously from Hebrew, *sakhar* or trade. As I write elsewhere in this work, a *sokher* is a businessman in Hebrew, but by *schachar* they meant "wheeling and dealing", negatively. The writer complains about this, and claims that the townspeople are suffering because of the *schachar*.

The complainant then deals with Geisel Werthan the *shuhmacher* (shoemaker) personally.

I asked Dr. Nuhn about the *schutzjuden*, or protected Jews (recipients of *schutzbriefen*, letters of protection). They were guaranteed their integrity, that is to say their lives, by the local nobleman providing the status. It was as though they were property of the duke, and it was forbidden to harm property of the duke.

We ran out of time, and Heinrich offered to take copies of other documents pertaining to Geisel to look at in Rotenburg.



Market Square, Rotenburg
The town hall is the large building on the right.

Correspondence between Geisel Werthan and the Town of Rotenburg

Following the aforementioned meeting in Tel Aviv, Dr. Nuhn provided me with a German transcription of the correspondence mentioned above. Two native German speakers helped me to understand what it was about. Leo Cohen lived on our street in Ramat Gan. Ilse Vogel was one of the winners of the Obermayer Award along with Dr. Nuhn. I happened to meet her at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem in 2005.

From an explanation by Leo Cohen, Ellen's neighbor in Ramat Gan, January, 2005:
24-8-(18)31 (August 24, 1831)

...I work with an assistant and an apprentice.

My father was already in the region of Westphalia accepted as a citizen.

Thanks to my diligent work, I am able to provide for my family—I will always behave in a manner that will give no reason for complaints against me.

And therefore, if His Excellence will grant me my humble request and will allow me to become a citizen of the city and will give his assent as soon as possible....I ask humbly...

My father Suhsman Werthan was accepted as a citizen of Rotenburg on June 20, 1808.

The response, same date as above:

No documentation was found that his father was a citizen.* The requester must pay the full payment of citizenship. In the matter of the request of the Israeli the certified shoemaker Geisel Werthan—we bring to his attention that the matter is still pending until acceptance of the bylaws... (27.8.1831)

Geisel's letter of August 27, 1831 on the refusal to bestow citizenship on him:
[He writes as if appealing to a nobleman] the letter is addressed to
Hochfuerstlicher Canzley.

The local clerk has thus far not carried out the decision of the higher authority from the 2nd of the previous month. This is against the law and would likely bring about punishment....

I do not belong to those Israelis who want to multiply against the law. Professionally speaking, I have learned the profession of shoemaking. I passed all of the years of apprenticeship and I have legally achieved the status of meister/master, according to the attached certificate from the head of the guild. I have employed assistants, so as an upright citizen, I have been a useful member of the town's population. Over seven months I have been engaged to my wealthy future bride, but because of the delay I can anticipate...a loss. In this case the mayor must compensate me for not responding positively to my request.

Even if the mayor would like to complain to the government, then in this administrative matter, it is impossible to postpone carrying out the decision of the higher authorities. I once again bow down...give instructions to the municipality or to the clerk Klein to accept me.

With deep admiration, your loyal servant.

Notes from a translation by Ilse Vogel, March 2005

Well-trained shoemaker, master for 2 years, employs another trained shoemaker, and an apprentice. He is applying for citizenship. His father was a citizen, he died long ago, he can feed his family, he has done nothing against the law.

O.K. but his father a citizen? No record of that.*

(a sharp letter from Geisel Werthan)

Don't you know the laws? You are not up to date! People in administration are telling you lies, I'm not one of those Jews who don't respect the law. My training was according to all necessary duties—it is my right to be accepted as a useful citizen. For more than 7 months I've been engaged to a wealthy bride, she will leave me! if you let me wait longer. Don't wait for another law! The magistrate should pay highly.

Oct. 4, 1831 (letter from a guild representative)

For two years G.W. is a member of the guild. He has the right to ask for citizenship, he was born here. The magistrate is not involved in guild affairs. Religion does not count because since May 14, 1816, Jews are equal to Christian citizens. His situation now is like being beyond law and order. The magistrate cannot wait until the next elections. Geisel is right!

January 31, 1832 (from the town)

Geisel is right, but we don't accept your reasons.

To the magistrate from the chancellery:

So many Jews live here, pursuing *schacher*-trade, some of them quite wealthy from it—we can't stop them growing by law. Our law is for Christian and Jews. You have to receive Geisel Werthan as a citizen.

*However, it can be confirmed that Geisel was correct. Both his father and his grandfather were citizens of Rotenberg.

Notes From a Day at the Central Archives in Jerusalem

Recording data dealing with the Werthan family of Rotenburg

Yesterday, 18.12.02, I spent part of the day at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People. My goal was to find out what resources they have on Rotenburg an der Fulda and Hofgeismar.

For Hofgeismar they have many records. However, most of the time was spent on one set of records, of births in Rotenburg an der Fulda, 1826-1910. This is apparently all they have on Rotenburg. All of these German records were in the form of tiny books, whose pages are photographs of records. There is no way one could make a copy from these records, even if it were allowed, and you need to work with a magnifying glass, in order to see the fine writing. Even then, in many cases, the records are illegible. The numbers refer to the record number, from the consecutive list.

Geisel m Dinchen
WERTHAN APFEL
b. 13.6.1806
|
66-Wolf
1835

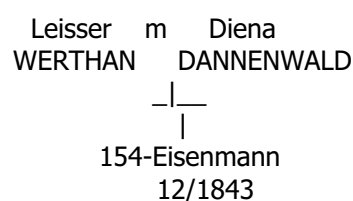
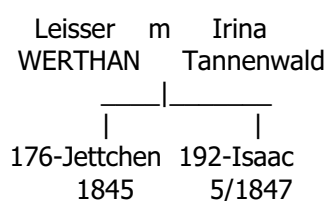
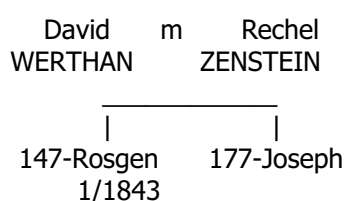
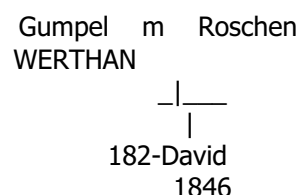
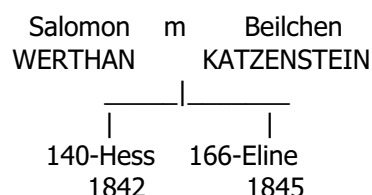
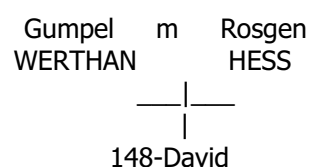
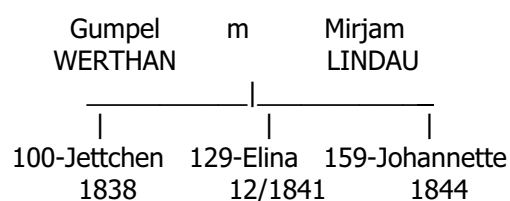
Geisel m Threse
WERTHAN APFEL
| | |
87-Lucas 114-Tröstel 115-David
1837 1840

Lucas survived and immigrated to the United States. Tröstel and David were twins, whose mother died in childbirth. Both of the twins died in the months after their birth. We soon find Geisel with a new wife, and a new son, David. In both the above and below cases, Geisel is listed as "meister schumacher," so I feel comfortable with the assumption that he is the same. Also we have the names of the three brothers who went to Tennessee, Wolf, Meyer and Levi (Löb). Wolf's mother's first name was Diena/Dinchen (or so we thought). The name was illegible, and Heinrich Nuhn later gave me this name. However, since that time both he and I have second thoughts about whether Dinchen or actually Therese was Geisel's first wife.

Geisel m Diena
WERTHAN KAISER
| | | | | |
128-David **151-Meyer** 172-Hirsh 191-Löb 216-Salomon **237-Elke**
11/1841 **24.8.1843** ? 1847? 1849 **1852**

David m Rachel (2 different Davids) David m Ester
Werthan Katzenstein W. Ekmann
| | | | | |
83-Fraedchen 104-Jettchen 123-Joseph 127-Hannchen 147-Rosgen 109-Goldchen 138-Jacob
1837 1838 1840 1841 1843? 1839 4/1842

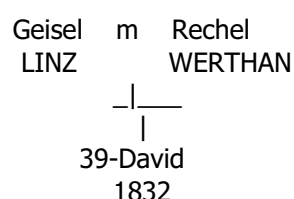
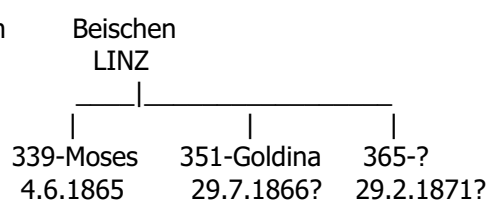
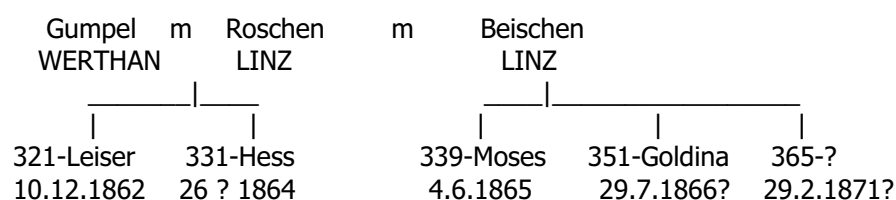
Sussman m Ester
WERTHAN D/TANNENWALD
| | | | |
85-Taubchen 105-Hannchen 119-David 141-Jetta 173-Mina
1837 1838 1840 1842 1845



There must have been many other Werthans; I first of all searched mainly the years that interested me. But also the earlier years and the later years were especially hard to read. And then the records end before the modern era.

The above Salomon, who married Beleh/Benlahen/Beichen/Emilie (all refer to the same woman, acc. to a source from the JGFF) Katzenstein, was born in 1816 in Germany. Their children did not survive. There is more about the Werthan charitable trust they set up in this book (see the chapter by Libby Werthan).

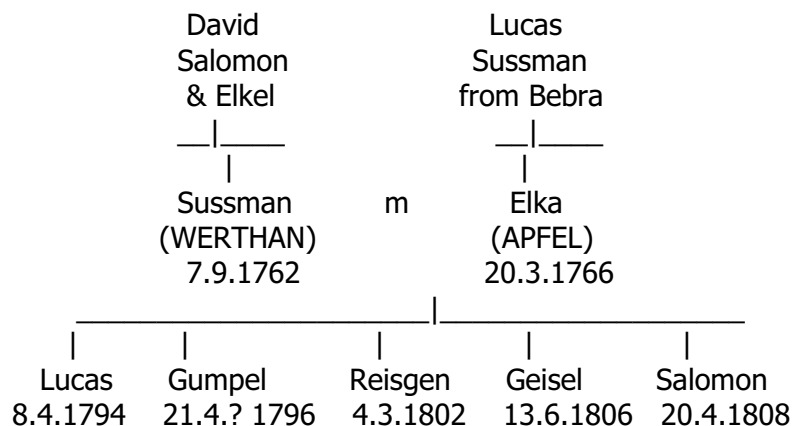
Below are additions after a second visit, on Dec. 25th, 2002 to the archive:



Following are other Werthan entries I was unable to read entirely:

- #23 Werthan?
- #30 Werthan?
- #32 [parent] born Werthan
- #26 [parent] born Werthan?
- #74 Werthan?
- #82 Taubchen born 1837 daughter of David W. & ? Stieglitz [Zerlina?]
- #112 Sussman Geisel b. 1839/40 son of Geisel Linz & Reichel Werthan
- #134 Elina Geisel Linz daughter of Geisel Linz & Reichel Werthan
- #165 Elinchen daughter of David Werthan & Elka Eckmann
- #177 Joseph b. 1845 son of David Werthan and Rayssal? Katzenstein
- #242 Leiser b. 10 7 1852 son of Sussmann Werthan & Ester Tannenwald
- #265 ? born 1856 son/daughter of Gumpel Werthan & Bassi? Linz
- #267 Benjamin born 29 4 1856 son of Jacob Werthan & ? BLumenthal?
- #287 4 9 1858 Russel? son/daughter of Gumpel Werthan & Lotti/Bossi Linz
- #317 David son of Leiser Werthan & ? Werthan
- #308 24 11 1860 ? son of Gumpel Werthan and Lotti Linz
- #590 28 11 1888 mother Jettchen nee Werthan

Our family from 1808 list of residents of Rotenburg:



Werthan Family Members With Whom There Has Been Contact

Since discovering the roots of the Werthan family, I have been in touch with Moshe and Libby Werthan from Nashville, Tennessee, and Jerusalem, Israel. Moshe is descended from Meier and Minnie Werthan nee Liebman. Meier was a son of Geisel and Deina Werthan of Rotenburg. In 2006 Moshe, Libby and I were in Rotenburg for the official opening of the Mikve Museum, or Hall of Remembrance. The nephew of Moshe and Libby, Tony and his wife Cathy, also joined them in Rotenburg, and he videotaped the visit.

In about the year 2007, I was contacted by Sonia Raymond, whose husband is a descendant of Sam and Minnie Raymond nee Werthan. Minnie was a daughter of Wolf/William and Henrietta Werthan. She married Samuel Michael Raymond, who by birth was named Rahmer. The two of them converted to Christianity, and their offspring are therefore Christian.

Early in 2009, I was contacted by Naama Yashuvi-Hayet, of Modiin, Israel, who is a descendant of Elka, daughter of Geisel Werthan and younger sister of Wolf and Meier Werthan. This has been especially interesting, because this branch of the family never immigrated to the US, but instead remained in Germany. Only one family eventually immigrated to Israel. Of course, this also means that they lost more family members in the Shoah, and we have a table (on page 39) from Naama which illustrates this. Her grandfather, Hugo Rosenthal=Yosef Yashuvi, wrote his memoirs, but he wrote them in German, and I have a Hebrew translation done by his son Uriel. There is no English translation. In his book Yosef describes his childhood in rural Germany, though in a different town.

Quite recently I once again did a Google search on the name Werthan and found the name Allan Werthan, in Colorado. He is a descendant from Sussman/Meschullam son of Eiseman Werthan, who died in 1862, and who lived in the currently blue-painted home in Brueckengasse Street near the bridge in Rotenburg. This house may also be seen in the etching on page 21 of this work. Allen's sister Susan Murawczyk has written a chapter on this family for the book.

Also I have been in contact with George Saul, a descendant of the Katzenstein family. Beile Katzenstein, sister of an ancestor of George, married Salomon Werthan; their children did not survive, and they were the couple who set up the Werthan charitable trust in 1889 (see page 41).

The Descendants of Elka Werthan
By Naama Yashuvi-Hayet

Naama has shared with me a translation to Hebrew of part of the autobiography written by her grandfather, which follows. (The English translation is mine. ES)

Translation of material from the book by Yosef Yashuvi (Hugo Rosenthal)

The book was originally written in German. The Hebrew translation from the German was done by Uriel Yashuvi, Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael, 2003. These memoirs date from 1947.

Ellen's note: Gustav was another name for Gumpel son of Dina and Geisel. The gold-seeker must have been Levi/Loeb, a brother of Elka, and he may have gone to Alaska during the Klondike Gold Rush, which began in 1897. This followed the Panic of 1893 and the Panic of 1896, when economic conditions in the United States were very depressed. We know from Meier's letter to Elka [page 57] that Levi was very poor.

Geisel lived from 1806-1888. He had two wives; both apparently died from complications of childbirth. With Dina Kaiser (1808-1854) he had 7 children: 5 sons, and 2 daughters. One son died in infancy. Of 4 sons born to the first wife, only 2 survived. The 5 oldest sons out of 6 surviving sons of Geisel immigrated to the United States.

Original publication data:

Hugo Rosenthal (Josef Jashuvi): *Lebenserinnerungen*

Herausgegeben von Micheline Prueter-Mueller und Peter Wilhelm A. Schmidt
Detmold, Germany, 2000

In the following passage Yosef discusses his mother, Elka Rosenthal nee Werthan, and her family.

"My mother was a religious woman. She was born in Rotenburg an der Fulda [on the Fulda River]. My grandfather Geisel Werthan was among the respected leaders of the community. I think that he was a shoemaker and that adjacent to his workshop was a store. My mother was next to last among the many brothers and sisters. Most of the children immigrated during the early [eighteen] sixties to America. Like many people of that time they expected to succeed, that is to say to get rich quickly. But none of them succeeded. When I heard about them, from my mother's stories, all of them were already old and broken, and had not achieved anything. One brother joined the gold-seekers in the north. From his adventures a vague account reached Rotenburg. In any case my mother often spoke of him. His fate was harsh. He did not find riches. In one of his journeys his feet froze.

"The sister [Janette], younger by a year or two, and the brother who was much older, I knew personally. Uncle Gustav was a teacher in Berleburg, a county seat in the principedom of Wittgenstein at the southern edge of Westphalia. He was especially close to my mother, and hence I had a special feeling for him and for his only daughter, my cousin Berni, who was already a young woman when my older brothers were in school. These relatives visited us fairly often. Connected to my cousin Berni, is my only memory of the large children's room which was on the upper story of our house. There she would stay with us. Early in the morning she would tell

us stories to which we would listen eagerly and with bated breath. Later she was married to an insurance clerk, had four or five children, and her life was not so happy. Uncle Gustav, after taking an early retirement, moved to Frankfurt am Main. But his pension was not enough to live on and he was obliged to prepare insurance policies for his son-in-law's firm.

The photo below is of Gustav, son of Elka and David Rosenthal.

Someone wrote on it in German, "Uncle Gustav, teacher"

His signature is on the bottom.



"The sister of my mother, Aunt Janette [nee Schönchen, mentioned in the letter, below (page 57), by Meier to Elka-ES] was married to Heimann [Heineman, Chaim] Plaut, a teacher in Grebenstein near Kassel. This marriage was barren. As a result their financial condition was very good. A Jewish teacher with a government position, if in addition he was a hazan and prayer leader, earned a good living. My uncle also wrote for the Kassel newspaper. Their situation was excellent. However these two relatives were quite occupied with their ailments and spent a great deal of money on treatments at Kissingen and other spas. When in a later period our financial situation was greatly worsened, my mother often complained that these relatives did not take it upon themselves to help out. Incidentally, these two sisters shared an amazing physical resemblance. They were of average height, slim, with yellowish skin, and their faces were covered, prematurely, with wrinkles. Thus I recall my mother from my youth: a woman who had aged early, with a pair of glowing and very good eyes...There was a case in which my mother had gone to town to do some shopping, and passing by a store called out, "Janette where are you coming from?" but Janette didn't respond. In a large mirror in a shop window she had seen her own image.

"In addition to these relatives there was the Goldschmidt family in Kassel, who were distant relatives. I don't recall that other names of relatives were mentioned. It is possible that there are other descendants of Geisel Werthan in America or other

parts of the world. In Germany the only relatives were my cousin Berni and the five sons and four daughters of my mother.

"I did not know my grandfather. He died at the age of 82 when I was two. My grandmother had already been among the departed for thirty years. After giving birth, if I am not mistaken, to seven or eight sons and two daughters, she died before reaching the age of forty, from birthing fever [sic], so that the two youngest children, my mother and Aunt Janette, grew up without a mother. As a result my mother had a very strong relationship with her father, of whom she spoke with deep love and admiration and she always stressed: his deep faith. I can delineate an image of this devoutness; it most likely resembled my mother's who excelled in her unchallenged faith in G-d. 'Thank G-d' she once said to me, 'for giving me so many troubles, that they have taught me to love life, because I must fight for it so hard'. Here each word is true: that she thanked G-d, which she did occasionally in her own short and simple prayers. Of just how difficult and full of hardship her life was, I will yet speak; of her love of life her glowing eyes bore witness."

Elka was the youngest daughter of Geisel Werthan.* [Most likely she was named for her grandmother Elcka/Elckel nee Apfel.-ES] She was born to his (second or) third wife, Dina nee Kaiser, in 1852. When she was 27, she married David Rosenthal from the village of Feldhausen, on the German/Dutch border. They made their home in the town of Lage, which is approximately in the middle of the distance between Rotenburg and Feldhausen, and later they moved to the nearby town of Bielefeld.

Like many of the Jews of the time, David dealt in trade of linen and in old rags, and the family lived in poverty and for a while in extreme poverty. Ten children were born to Elka and David. The eldest, Hulda, died from an illness in her childhood. All the other children reached adulthood and received a good education in spite of the poverty of the family, but the wars of the 20th century extracted a very heavy price from them.

In the First World War *all five sons* (Siegfried, Karl, Hugo and the twins Georg and Leo) were drafted into the German army. Georg (whose Jewish name was Geisel, for his grandfather), fell in 1916 and Siegfried died in 1918 of wounds received some time earlier.

Elka and David died at the beginning of the 1930s. On the eve of World War II, all of their children left Germany.

Their four daughters immigrated to Holland, which in those days appeared to be a safe haven for Jews. Dina, Rosalie and Alma were murdered in Nazi death camps. Grete survived, after being hidden by a Dutch girlfriend. Leo immigrated to the United States with his wife Meta and sons Werner and Edgar. Karl and his son Klaus also immigrated to the United States, but his wife Trude and young son Georg who were in Amsterdam, did not succeed in escaping. Georg died in Mauthausen. Trude was imprisoned in Bergen Belsen until the end of the war. Their older son Klaus was mortally wounded in the Korean War and later died from his wounds.

Hugo (Yosef) Rosenthal was the only brother who turned to Zionism. In 1925 he made aliyah to Palestine with his wife, the pianist Betty (Judith=Yehudit in Hebrew) nee Goldschmidt, and their three young children (Gavriel, Rahel and Uriel), and worked as a gymnastics and shop teacher in the Reali High School in Haifa. In 1929

they returned to Germany and lived in Berlin where Hugo taught in a Jewish school and was active in the Zionist movement and intellectual circles. As a result of the Nazi takeover of the government in 1933 Hugo established an educational institution for Jewish children in Herrlingen in southern Germany. In this school, relatively safe from the events in the larger cities, lived tens of Jewish children who had been forbidden from studying in the German schools. Hugo applied a modern educational approach under the influence of thinkers such as Pestaluzzi and Montessori. For five years he delayed his return to the Land of Israel until he was forced to close the school by Nazi dictate.

In August 1939, two weeks before the outbreak of war, he returned with his wife to Israel. In honor of his return he called himself Yosef Yashuvi (Joseph the one who returned). From 1940 to 1956 he managed a children's school named "Ahava" [Love] in Kiryat Bialik where he continued to apply his special educational approach, which combined work and study, Judaism and socialism. Upon his retirement Yosef received a medal of honor and excellence for his educational activities from UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) in Geneva. Over the years he did research, wrote and published psychological research, fairy tales, and philosophical writings.

The oldest son of Yehudit and Yosef, Gavriel, who was named for both of his uncles who died in World War I (Georg Siegfried), served in World War II in the supply unit of the Jewish Brigade of the British Army. [In 1943 he was with his unit on a British ship, the *Erinपुरa*, which had left the port of Alexandria, Egypt, as part of a large convoy of British ships. The ship sunk while on its way to Malta, about 30-50 kilometers north of Benghazi, Libya, after being hit by German bombers.-ES] Gavriel's body was never found. This heavy loss oppressed his parents until their dying day. Yehudit died in 1976 and Yosef in 1980. Today there are sixteen living descendants, all residing in Israel: one son and one daughter, three grandchildren and eleven great grandchildren.



Elka Rosenthal nee Werthan as a teenager

*Note: there is some confusion about which sister, Janette or Elka, was the younger. This has been discovered too late for me to research for this book. [ES]

Children of Elka nee Werthan and David Rosenthal
 Their children are in bold. + means married to the person above.
 ++ means the next generation.

Hulda	1880	1887
Siegfried	1881	1918 (WWI)
+ Frida Kugelman	1880	~1963
Dina	1883	1943 Auschwitz
+ David Zilversmit		1943 Auschwitz
Karl	1885	1953 US
+Trude Schuster	1890	? US
++Klaus	1916	1950 US Korean War
++ Georg Siegfried	1919	1941 Mauthausen
Rosalie	1886	1943 Sobibor
Hugo (Yosef Yashuvi)	1887	1980 Israel
+ Betti (Yehudit) Goldschmidt	1893	1976 Israel
Leo	1889	1960 US
+ Meta Stern	1891	1980 US
++ Werner (Wayne)	1920	1976 US
++ Edgar	1927	1994 US
Georg	1889	1916 (WWI)
Grete	1891	1955 Netherlands
Alma	1895	1943 Sobibor

For anyone unfamiliar with the names, Mauthausen and Sobibor (and of course Auschwitz) were German concentration camps. Sons Siegfried and Georg died fighting in the German Army in World War I.

*Goldschmidt was one of the most common Jewish surnames of the region. Elckel/Emilie Gotthelf of Hofgeismar married Meier Goldschmidt son of the merchant Abraham and Yette nee Meierstein of Gudensberg, on July 10, 1872. But I don't know whether they remained in Germany following their marriage, nor whether they had children.

Rotenburg an der Fulda
By Libby Werthan
On the occasion of the opening of the Mikve Museum
September 14, 2006

We arrived in Rotenburg shortly before Shabbat on Friday September 8, 2006 after a somewhat hectic drive from Frankfurt on the autobahn. The scenic countryside was most impressive with very green farms and small villages nestled in the rolling hills.

Our accommodations were at the 4 star Post Hotel which sat immediately next to the railroad tracks. It was located in what is called "old town" in the center of the village. The town's character has been retained as the houses and shops were just as they had been in the medieval period. The half-timbered houses had been well-maintained and combined the architectural styles from the 14th to the 18th centuries. They were both beautiful and charming.

We made *kiddush* (blessing for the wine) and *hamotzi* (blessing for the bread) in our room and then had dinner with our distant cousin from Ramat Gan, Israel, Ellen Stepak. It was through her research and efforts that we came to know that the Werthan family originated in Rotenburg, a two hour drive northeast of Frankfurt and halfway between Fulda and Kassel.

Late Shabbat morning, we met Dr. Heinrich Nuhn, the spearhead behind the events of the weekend. Dr. Nuhn is a story in and unto himself. A former history teacher at the community high school, he has spent many years researching the Jewish families which once lived in Rotenburg, and preserving the village's Jewish history has become the focus of his adult life. In 1993, he exploded the myth of a Nazi-free Rotenburg and at his school he founded a student group that built a replica of the synagogue that was in the town. On the top floor of the school, Dr. Nuhn and the students have developed a Jewish museum which includes this replica along with many pictures from the former Jewish community. We saw several documents from various members of the Werthan family. One of the most moving exhibits was a divided case with broken glass from Kristalnacht in 1938 on one side and broken glass from the pogrom of 1848 alongside a letter from a local minister to his 11 year old son telling him that "after tomorrow there will be no Jews in Rotenburg."

Dr. Nuhn has been a wonderful model of tolerance for thousands of students until his retirement a year ago. But he continues his work. After discovering a building in which Rotenburg's community mikve (ritual bath) once existed, he was instrumental in having it designated an historic site and later in encouraging the town to buy the building. The blue and white tiled mikve (from the 1800's) was then excavated (it had been buried beneath a concrete slab). Archeologists were brought in when it was discovered that something else lay beneath. Another mikve from the 1700's was found in a deep shaft with a connection to a small section for kashering dishes and knives. For the Jews of Rotenburg, the mikve was as important as the synagogue itself because not only did every bride have to immerse herself in the mikve before her marriage, but every married woman had to use the mikve seven days after the completion of her menstrual period before being allowed to resume relations with her husband. When the work on the mikve was completed, the upper two floors of the building were converted into a Jewish museum (called Hall of Remembrance) which houses many Jewish pictures, documents, and artifacts, some dating back to the 1700's.

There are even two Torahs on display and among the many documents is the ledger book of the Werthan Trust, a foundation that was begun by Salomon son of Judeman David Werthan (1810-1889) and his wife Beilchen nee Katzenstein (1818-1892) in the 1800's. Their children had died young, so they created a foundation of 10.000 marks for the benefit of needy Jewish and Christian children of Rotenburg. Salomon was a first cousin once removed of Meier Werthan, who came to Nashville in the 1800's.



Libby at the Mikve Museum entrance

For his work, Dr. Nuhn has received many awards, the most significant being the highest honor conferred in the German Republic, the Federal Order of Merit, as well as the Obermayer German Jewish History Award established to pay tribute to Germans who have made significant contributions to preserving Jewish historical, cultural and material remains in local communities.

Moshe and I, along with the descendants of the Rotenburg Jewish community that Dr. Nuhn was able to locate, were invited to the opening and dedication of this museum. There were forty of us in all from a number of different families. Participants came from the United States, Switzerland, Great Britain, Australia, Germany, Belgium, Israel and Canada including our nephew, Tony Werthan and his wife, Cathy. Tony videotaped many hours of the homes, people, and activities which we have edited and developed into a short documentary. If you would like to view the film, please contact Ellen Stepak.



View of the mikve showing the new one with the blue and white tiles
and the much older one below

Of the families attending, some had converted to Christianity, but most were still Jewish. One man, whose family had converted several generations ago, converted back to Judaism with his wife after visiting Rotenburg several years ago, meeting Dr. Nuhn, and hearing the stories of his ancestors. There were three great, great, great granddaughters of the village rabbi (1850's) under whose term a bloody fight broke out concerning who could be called up to the Torah. I believe this was the same Rabbi who vetoed the leadership's wishes that the public mikve be closed, as some of the women who used it became quite ill. He was discharged from his position and his descendants later converted to Christianity.

The Jewish community in Rotenburg was founded in the early 1600's after the 30 Years War, although there was an earlier Jewish presence, but the Jews had been expelled from the town. They were invited in to add to the depleted population. It is recorded that the Jews had to pay twice the tax as others, and were required to pay for keeping the public toilets clean, and to provide the mayor with a horse.

The Werthan family lived in Rotenburg for at least five generations beginning in the late 1600's. The widow and sons of David son of Salomon, created the name Werthan at about 1808, when Jews were required, under the Napoleonic decrees, to take surnames. No one knows how they came up with the name, but (to our good fortune) since it is an original creation, one might assume that all those with the surname Werthan are related. (Dr. Nuhn has suggested that this was possibly a misspelling of the name Wertheim.) David had a son (among many children) named Sussman, who in turn had a son named Geisel (Joseph), who in turn had a son named Meier (Nashville's own). Meier, of course, had American born sons named Morris and Joseph from whom came the many present day Werthans. In fact, Meier, son of Jeremy Werthan, is the great great great grandson of the original Meier Werthan born in Rotenburg.



Sign at 19 Brotgasse, at the site of the former Jewish
The Synagogue was damaged in 1938 and destroyed in 1948

On Sunday morning, all the participants again met with Dr. Nuhn and took a tour of the village. Dr. Nuhn told us that there were three streets that had been predominately Jewish, one of which was Brotgasse [literally, Bread Street]. On the main street was the Joseph Werthan home, since destroyed, a looming four story house. At 22 Brotgasse, directly across the street from the synagogue, was the home of Sussman Werthan, father of Geisel, which had also at one time housed a private mikve.



The Joseph Werthan (born 1845) home on Breitenstrasse [St.]
Joseph was the son of David Judeman
Photo from the late 19th C.

We were told that there were *mikvaot* and synagogues in at least four private homes, and these homes were the nicest in the village. One of these was a Werthan home. Another was the home of the Wertheim family, who left Rotenburg, and manufactured Wertheim sewing machines, beginning about 1868. The founder of the company was Joseph Wertheim (1804-1899), who was also a Frankfurt city delegate

for the Democratic Party. The family built a very large manufacturing plant in Frankfurt, and later (1870) in Spain.



Hebrew sign above a doorpost in Rotenburg
Apparently this was in honor of the building or a renovation of the house in 1775

At 19 Brotgasse was the Jewish school and behind it, the synagogue which no longer exists. Miraculously a Hebrew inscription on one of the houses survived obliteration of everything Jewish by the Nazis and is there for all to see.



Sign marking the building which was the Jewish
schoolhouse and synagogue
commemorating the former school

In addition to small manufacturing businesses, most of the Jews were shop owners and it was said that if you wanted the finest products, go to a Jewish shop. This came to a halt in 1933 when bulletins were circulated ordering the villagers not to buy Jewish goods. Also a number of Jews were master craftsmen in a variety of fields and were reputed to do excellent work. Their success is quite obvious when one views the size and beauty of their homes. Sussman and his son Geisel were master shoemakers, in the days before mass production turned this into a less desirable occupation.

On Sunday afternoon, the dedication ceremony took place in what had been the Duke's palace. It was an impressive complex of buildings with a central plaza and a large park to the rear. One of the members of our group was descended from the "court Jew" of the village (financier of the Duke's many activities). Many more of the townspeople attended the ceremony than had been officially invited. Of the 250 attendees only 40 were from our group. The program began with a trio of young flutists and two of their selections were *Hava Negila* and *Hatikva*. We were welcomed by the Mayor who was followed by a series of dignitaries from the state of Hesse, all of whom spoke in German. We were provided written English translations of their remarks. One after the other spoke of the imperative to refurbish these former Jewish sites, to recognize the injustices that occurred, and not repress them. They spoke of overcoming the attitude of "let bygones be bygones" and stressed that we have to face history to prevent repeating it.

We walked to the museum (you can walk everywhere in the center of the town) in front of which is a large sculpture of Moses, created by a local artist and sculpted entirely from a large single tree. With the large sculpture in front of it, one could never miss finding the museum. Rotenburg's primary industry is tourism and this is meant to be a major tourist site. After a few remarks a local choral group sang, among other songs, "Go Down Moses". A woman cantor from Fulda, Lea Linde Weiland, chanted the prayer for the dead, "*El Malai Rachamim*" [meaning G-d full of mercy], and a mezuzah was affixed to the doorpost. The theme of Moses was chosen as it speaks to both Jews and Christians and has a positive connotation as opposed something negative from the Holocaust.

An outdoor reception followed.

On Monday morning, we all met at the Jewish cemetery which is on a beautiful wooded hillside above the town. The cemetery plots still exist in their original state, the oldest one dating back to 1682. Dr. Nuhn had carefully laid out a numbered map for us so that we might identify the gravestones. Some were not legible; most were in Hebrew. We located the graves of many of the Werthans including Joseph/Geisel, father of Meier. There was even a Betty Werthan, believe it or not!

One of our group, a woman from the Linz family, had lived in Rotenburg as a child and remembered not being allowed to enter the gates of the cemetery, as she was too young. The Linz family placed an additional marker on the gravestone of their last family member to be buried there which was accompanied by a short ceremony.

In the evening, we were feted to a reception at the City Hall and again, there were speeches, music, picture taking, gifts, and a light supper. And then it was over.

We are still savoring this incredible experience. As recently as eight years ago, the Nashville Werthans had no idea from which town in Germany they had come. To suddenly be presented with such a wealth of family history is truly a magnificent gift and one we will treasure for many years to come.



In the foreground the Werthan home at 22 Brotgasse
Where Sussman and Elke and their family resided

About Apfels/Appels (or Halevi) in Bebra
(There are Apples on our Tree!)



The Old Center of Bebra was destroyed by Allied bombing in World War II

Thanks to Dr. Nuhn, we know that among our ancestors were members of the Apfel (pronounced Apple) family of Bebra, a prominent family in that town. Elcka wife of Sussman Werthan was from this family. Bebra is a lively town, and during the years when West and East Germany were separate countries, it was an important border crossing, located in West Germany.

Members of the Apfel family had an agency for immigration from Germany. I don't know in what years this was. Some members of the family held public positions as district representatives, and their black marble gravestones bear witness to their status in the community. Men of this Apfel family were members of the tribe of Levi, and therefore, on the men's gravestones one may find portrayal of a pitcher on top, symbol of Levis. The surname Apfel is often spelled Appel, but it is the same name.



In earlier times, Jews who died in Bebra were buried in the Rotenburg Jewish cemetery. I have documented the cemetery of Bebra, where burials took place from 1869-1935, and this documentation may be found at www.jewishgen.org at the JOWBR project.

Burials in Rotenburg

9. Jachet Apfel from Bebra, died 27.3.1862 (born Levy, wife of Wulf Apfel, age 67)
 34. Suss, daughter of Eljakum, wife of Jakob, died 4.5.1839 (Susschen, widow of Jakob Apfel from Bebra, age 72)
 36. Gela Ap... (Gela, nee Apfel of Nentershausen, wife of Sussman Apfel from Bebra, died 1.8.1837, age 46)
 71. Sussman (Jekutiel), son of Jakob Halevi Apfel from Bebra, died 15.2.1862
 157. Jakob, son of Abraham Sg"l of Bebra, died 23.6.1817 (Sg"l is a form of Levi)
 177. Madchen, daughter of Meier Ha-Kohen from Nentershausen, died 1.5.1831 (Madchen Appel, died in Bebra, age 34)

Burials in Bebra—both Halevi and Apfel/Appel

Given name	Surname	Hebrew name	Dates	Maiden name	Spouse's name
Lucas	Apfel	Elyakum s.o.Benjamin	1822-1899		
Julie/Giedchen	Apfel	Gitel	10.1.1831-30.11.1901	Meyerhof	Elyakum
Friederike	Apfel	Rivka d.o. Mordechai	1836-19?6		Avraham
Avraham	Apfel	Avraham s.o. Benjamin	1828-1881?		Freiderike
Meier	Apfel	Meier s.o. Yekutiel Halevi	D. 1887		Esther
Esther	Appel			Oppenheim	Meier
Bernhard	Apfel	Benjamin s.o. Elyakum	28.4.1858-20.10.1913		
Gitten			25.12.1889?		Jehuda son of Benjamin Halevi
Chana					Benjamin Halevi

Other Apfels:

Meier Appel may have been the son of Sussman Appel and Gella Appel.
 Jacob Appel (teacher), 25, married 2.10.1850 Gidel Loewenstein, 26. He was also the son of Sussman and Gella.
 Friedericke/Fradchen Apfel, 21 (25.8.1846), daughter of Jonas Apfel (*handelsmann*, or merchant in English) and Jettchen Apfel, married Joseph Levi, 25.
 Death record: Wolf Apfel, age 5 years and 8 months, son of Jonas Apfel and Jette Apfel, died 13.6.1838.
 Jette Apfel died on 26.1.1853.
 Jonas Apfel died on 12.5.1866.
 In addition to the above, I have collected much data on Apfels from Bebra and the vicinity, but have made no headway on mapping them. I am still where I started, with only the names provided by Heinrich Nuhn on the family tree.

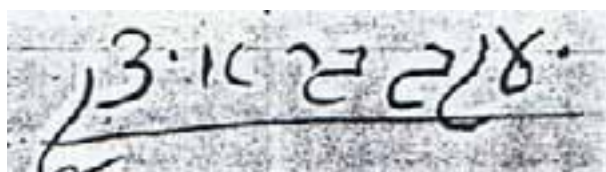
Comment:

s.o. is short for son of
 d.o. is an abbreviation for daughter of

The Gotthelf Family of Hofgeismar Of Itzig and Roschen nee Werthan

There is only one Gotthelf Family in Hofgeismar, which is about an hour and a half ride north from Rotenburg. It may be that the Gotthelf family arrived there from elsewhere, but I do not know from where. The fact that there was no other Gotthelf family, on the one hand, has made documenting them simpler, because all of the Hofgeismar Gotthelf records pertain to this family. On the other hand, we cannot research them further back in time, nor do we have the names of siblings from the older generations. The problem may one day be resolved if a surname adoption list for Hofgeismar surfaces. In this case, we may be able to discover a relationship to others with a different surname. Different brothers did sometimes take different surnames.

Some of the earliest records I found in Salt Lake City pertain to Jacob Gotthelf and his wife Roschen nee Heskell. She was born in Abterode*, in the region of the semi-sovereign dukedom of Rotenburg. It was a center of Jewish settlement during the 18th and 19th centuries. Jacob died on May 6th, 1837 at the age of 81, which means he was born approximately in 1756. Roschen died on March 27th, 1846 at the age of 86. So she was born about 1760. The earliest record was of a court procedure, where I found the following:

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on a light-colored, textured paper. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style and appears to read 'Yaakov bar Itzek'.

Signature of "Yaakov bar Itzek" (Jacob son of Isaac)
From an 1809 court document found in the Family History Library
In the document is a list of the witnesses, including the name Jacob Itzig Gotthelf
This proves that this is the signature of our ancestor.

A photograph of a handwritten document, likely a marriage record, written in cursive. The text is in German and includes the date 'am 10ten Februar 1834' and the names 'Itzig Gotthelf' and 'Roschen Werthan aus Rotenburg'. The handwriting is elegant and typical of the early 19th century.

From the record of the marriage of Itzig Gotthelf and Roschen Werthan(n) of Rotenburg
10 February 1834

The groom was 29, and the bride was 27; their father's names are also given.

Since the sons of Itzig and Roschen, Sigmund and Jacob, emigrated in the mid-19th century, the family name soon disappeared from Hofgeismar. Their daughter Jette/Henriette also emigrated. Their other daughter Emilie/Elckel, married Meier Goldschmidt from Gudensberg; there is no further information on Emilie and Meier after their marriage. Since they were married in 1872, it may be that they missed the wave of immigration to the United States. And because Goldschmidt is one of the most common Jewish surnames, it is difficult to research without more to go on than what we have.

*Thanks to Dr. Nuhn for deciphering the town name (4/1/2010).

The Hofgeismar Jewish Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery of Hofgeismar is located outside the town proper, on a hill, near the local hospital. It is kept locked, and you wouldn't come across it without prior knowledge of its existence.

The cemetery, like other Jewish cemeteries, has an old part and a new part. I have no information about the beginnings of the cemetery. The earliest documented gravestone dates from 1731. The latest burials bear witness to a displaced persons camp at Hofgeismar after World War II. The last burial dates from 1949. It is likely that by that time, the remaining refugees had dispersed to other locations. Some of these post-War gravestones give a town of birth, but others do not. Possibly those responsible for burial were not always aware of the former town of the deceased, or did not always consider this important enough to inscribe on the tombstones.

On the day that we visited the cemetery, there was hot, merciless sun. Therefore, some of the older gravestones especially were overly exposed to this sun.

At the time, I was unaware that the cemetery had already been documented, and after our return, I began to translate the epitaphs on the stones which I had photographed. Recently, someone posted a letter to GerSIG about a website in German documenting Jewish cemeteries in Hesse, and there I found the Hofgeismar Jewish cemetery, with 126 gravestones. The early gravestones have no surnames. The gravestones have been photographed and documented, and may be viewed at LAGIS Hessen/Themen/Juedische Friedhoefe. Only one member of our family is identifiable, and she is Roesgen Gotthelf nee Werthan, daughter of Sussman and Elke, sister of Geisel, and wife of Yitzhak (Itzig); she died in 1878. She is at grave number 44 on the Hofgeismar list. Presumably, Itzig, his parents and others of the family are also buried in Hofgeismar, though no graves have been found for them.



Memorial to the six million, Hofgeismar Jewish cemetery, 1945-6



The gravestone of Roesgen/Roschen Gotthelf nee Werthan
daughter of Sussman (Meschulam) of Rotenburg an der Fulda
in the Hofgeismar Jewish cemetery

Here lies buried
the modest and honest woman
Mrs. Reisgen daughter of Meschulam
wife of Yitzhak Gotthelf
She died in old age on Thursday
13 Tishri and was buried on
the second day of Succoth 5639
May her soul be bound in the knot of life

Note: Roschen's husband's name Itzig (Jewish)=Yitzhak (Hebrew)=Isaac.
Roschen died on October 11th, 1878.
Itzig preceded her in death.

Sigmund Godhelp and Jacob Godhelp in the United States

Sigmund Godhelp, son of Itzig Gotthelf and Roschen Gotthelf nee Werthan, was born Sussman Gotthelf on November 25, 1835 in Hofgeismar, Hesse, and presumably was named for his grandfather Sussman Werthan (d. 1828) of Rotenburg an der Fulda. Often the German Jews had an official name but another they were known by. In this case Sussman was known as Sigmund, at least after his immigration.

He arrived in the US on November 1, 1854, on the boat *Johanna*, from Bremen to Baltimore. He may have resided in Baltimore at first, but I don't recall any information that led me to this conclusion. At any rate, the 1860 US census finds him in Hamilton County, Tennessee, far from Nashville. Other members of his family to immigrate to the United States were his brother Jacob, and his sister Henrietta [see the next chapter]. All three siblings changed their surname to Godhelp in the United States.

Sigmund married Bertha Liebman on May 19, 1870, in Nashville, as mentioned in the chapter entitled Starting Point: Of Three Families in Nashville. In the 1870 US census, he is listed as a rag dealer. He was a US citizen.

Sigmund was one of the two original founders of the Werthan Bag Company, together with his first cousin Meier Werthan. In the Nashville City Directories, the name of the company was S. Godhelp and M. Werthan. After Sigmund's death in 1895, the company name was changed.

In the Confederate Army

Today, September 21, 1999, I have received Confederate Army papers for Sigmund Godhelp from NARA. Although they are not a wealth of information, I need to make order in what they do contain. First of all, Sigmund enrolled at Knoxville, TN, on May 20th, 1861, and enlisted at Corinth, Mississippi, on May 10th, 1862, for twelve months. He joined Capt. Powell's Company, 19 Regiment Tennessee Infantry.

According to other documents, it appears that Sigmund enlisted in Knoxville, Tennessee, and served as a private in Company A of the 19th Tennessee Infantry, and finally was taken prisoner at [the Battle of] Chattanooga in 1863. While a prisoner, he took the oath of allegiance to the United States (making him ineligible for a pension from the former Confederacy). He was released after taking this oath, and may be found in the 1865 business directory for Nashville. According to my source for this, the archives of the Nashville Jewish Federation, Sigmund and his brother Jacob became US citizens in October, 1864.

"This regiment was known at various times as Captain Powell's Company, Company B and Company A, 19th Regiment Tennessee Infantry.

"The 19th Regiment Tennessee Infantry was organized for State service June 11, 1861: transferred to the service of the Confederate States August 15, 1861, and re-organized May 10, 1862."

Later there was consolidation of companies to form the "3d Consolidated Tennessee Infantry which was paroled at Greensboro, N.C., May 1, 1865", two weeks after Lincoln's assassination, and at the War's end."

Sigmund was captured near Chattanooga on September 10th, 1863. It says in his papers, "Deserter to be released at Nashville. Has taken the oath of allegiance." This date does not correspond to the above date of the Battle of Chattanooga. The Battle of Chattanooga actually took place November 24-25, 1863.

Jacob Godhelp

Jacob, brother of Sigmund, was born on 9 April 1838 in Hofgeismar, and immigrated from Bremen to Baltimore, Maryland, on 20 July 1857. At the time of the 1860 census, he was living in Jasper, Marion County, Tennessee, where he had a clothing store. He moved to Nashville, before moving to New York City. J. Godhelp, clerk, worked at 59 Market Street, according to the 1868 Nashville City Directory. In 1869 he was in partnership with Wolf Werthan.

For Jacob, on the Internet there is a notice from the *New York Times*, dated April 14, 1888, which states that his shirt manufacturing company, J. Godhelp & Son, of 554 Broadway St., New York City, was in financial difficulties. The son was Siegmund. Given the amounts mentioned, Jacob and family must have been well off, at least before the difficulties. Jacob had previously worked for I. Frank & Co. from 1868, receiving \$70,000 upon leaving the firm in 1882. In 1888 the largest creditor of J. Godhelp & Son was Bertha Godhelp nee Frank, wife of Jacob and mother of Siegmund. I do not know whether this was actually a declaration of bankruptcy.

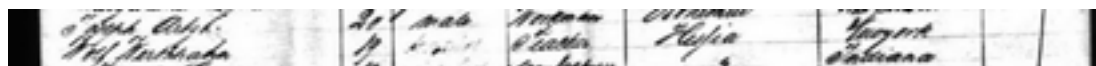
The image shows a handwritten military record on a form. At the top, the name "Sigmund Godhelp" is written in cursive. Below it, "Des. to 4. 19 Regt Tenn Infy" is written. The form has several fields: "Appears on a Roll" with "Roll" written below it; "of deserters from the rebel Army, forwarded from Stevenson, Ala., Sept. 15, 1863, and to be released at Nashville, Tenn., by Capt. R. M. Goodwin, Asst. Pro. Mar. Gen., Dept. of the Cumberland."; "Roll dated" followed by "Not dated"; "Came to our lines" followed by "Chattanooga"; "When" followed by "Sept 10, 1863"; "Remarks:" followed by "Took the Oath of allegiance at Chattanooga"; "Number of roll:" followed by "1"; "sheet" followed by "1"; and "Copyist" followed by a signature. The form is numbered "4894" at the bottom left.

The document above shows part of Sigmund's record of service in the Confederate Army. According to the language used, it has to be a US rather than a Confederate document.

What We Know about Wolf and Henrietta (nee Jette Gotthelf) Werthan

Wolf (birth name spelled Wulf) Werthan was born in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Kurhessen, on October 26, 1835. He was the oldest known son of the master shoemaker Geisel Werthan (13.6.1806-10.1.1888) and his first wife Dinchen Apfel (ca 1806-ca.1835), who may have died giving birth to Wolf, because we find Geisel with a new wife, Therese Apfel (ca 1806-18.2.1840) and new children beginning in the year 1837. However, as I have written elsewhere, it has now come to my attention that Dinchen and Therese may have been one and the same. In this case Wolf had five surviving brothers and two sisters; all but one were half-siblings.

Wolf was presumably named for his grandfather Wulf Apfel, father of Dinchen (or Therese). In the marriage record of Geisel and Dinchen, she is listed as born in Waltertheusen, Thuringia. According to Dr. Nuhn, Wolf's grandmother, Elcke or Elckel, daughter of Lucas Sussman, was from an Apfel family who resided in Bebra, where some members of the Apfel family managed an agency for immigration.



The ship's manifest line for Wolf Werthan (misspelled Werthahn)
age 19, teacher, from Hessa to New York

Wolf arrived in the US on 31 August 1855, by the ship *Meta* from Bremen to New York. The first place in the US where we find records of him is Nashville, Tennessee. There are annual listings in the Nashville, TN, city directories, and in 1869 we find an advertisement for his second-hand goods store (next page). But the last listing found in a Nashville directory is from 1871. Around that time, he and the family moved to Chicago, which, by the way, was the year of the Great Chicago fire. Wolf was known as William in the United States.

Henrietta immigrated at an interesting and perhaps dangerous time, on July 19, 1862. Her boat *Goeschen* took her from Bremen to the port of New York. I don't know when or how she was able to make the journey to Tennessee, as the US Civil War was going on at the time (reminder: her brother Sigmund was fighting for the South), until 1865.

Wolf and Henrietta married in Nashville on 29.7.1866. As stated elsewhere in this work, through my genealogical research, I have discovered that Henriette Gotthelf (Godhelf), born 13.12.1839 in Hofgeismar, was Wolf's first cousin.

In the 1870 US census, their son Sigmund, age three, was recorded as born in Illinois. This brings up the possibility that the family had moved to Chicago, then returned temporarily to Nashville.

In the 1880 census for Chicago, all of the children are recorded as being born in Tennessee, and this doesn't seem logical, as the family disappeared from the Nashville City directories long before 1880. In 1880 William Werthan was working as a clerk in his brother Lucas' hat store. The family's address was 54 Hastings Street.

Wolf died on May 10th, 1901, and was buried in Chicago. According to his death certificate, he was a bookkeeper.

I have the account of two members of the family, Bill Feldman (grandson) and Earl Brenn (great-grandson) [see handwritten statement, page 8 above], who each recalled Henrietta sitting by the stove in the kitchen of the home of Nathan and Emma. She, long a widow, was always dressed in black, and was always drinking coffee. They were afraid of her, and would run by her, thinking she was a witch. Unfortunately, there are no known photos of Wolf or Henrietta.



Advertisement from the 1869 Nashville City Directory



Most of our ancestors did not come through Hamburg, rather through Bremen.
 One who did was Meier Werthan.
 This photo is from the early 20th century.

The Werthan Family of Nashville, Tennessee

By Moshe Werthan

Morris Werthan, patriarch of the Werthan clan in Nashville, died suddenly of a ruptured appendix in 1931 at only 55 years of age. His tragic death, in the prime of life, threw his older son, Bernard, into the lead operating position of a fast growing and successful manufacturing company in Nashville after only a few years in the business. Bernard at age 28, and his brother Albert, 22, had joined their father and his younger brother, Joe, at a company which had grown from a few people in the 1890's with a few employees to a very large operation employing some 1200 people.

Bernard, Joe, and Albert took on the task with gusto and continued to build the company even further, reaching its most profitable years during the 1940's and on into the 1950's. The company continued to grow, adding a bleachery and textile print works in the late '40's, a multiwall paper bag factory in the '50's, and a plastic extrusion and bag plant in the '60's. Howard Werthan, Joe's son, joined the company in the 1940's, Bernard Werthan Jr. joined the firm in 1955, and his younger brother, Morris II joined in 1960.

Bernard Sr. and Albert, together with their wives, Leah Rose Bernstein and Mary Jane Lowenheim, were extremely active in both the Jewish and general communities. Unusual for the day, all four graduated from college; Bernard and Albert from University of Pennsylvania Wharton School, Leah Rose from Wellesley College, and Mary Jane from Vanderbilt University. Mary Jane was honored as Lady of the Bracelet while a student at Vanderbilt, the highest position awarded to a woman on campus, and later was the first woman to serve on the Vanderbilt Board of Trustees. Leah Rose served on the Wellesley board for many years and headed the effort to build a 150 apartment residence for seniors (the Leah Rose residence). Bernard Sr. was the first chair of The Urban League in Nashville, and chaired both the Jewish Federation annual campaign and the United Way campaign. Albert was President of the Nashville Symphony and served on the Fisk University Board of Directors.

The Werthan family inherited a tradition of philanthropy and community activity from its Rotenburg ancestors and pursued both with a vengeance. Werthans were involved in almost every aspect of community life in Nashville, while at the same time managing a growing and successful business which was begun by their grandfather, Meier, an immigrant from Rotenburg in 1866.

Werthan Bag Co, later Werthan Industries, is still operating today after 116 years and 5 generations of Werthans. Descendants of Meier and Morris Werthan are still very active in Nashville community activities and offshoots of the clan live all over the world including Israel.

One of the most interesting documents we are lucky to have is the following letter written by Meier Werthan in Nashville to his sister Elka Rosenthal in Germany.

Nashville, Tenn., March 5, 1907

Dear sister Elka,

Your letter of January 6 arrived safely, and I would have answered it long ago, but something always got in the way and hindered me from writing. I was very pleased to hear from you again, and especially to learn that you and your family are well. I can also say the same of myself and the children. My dear wife has been suffering from rheumatism for years, but she is not bedridden, thank God, and is otherwise well and happy. As far as my family is concerned, we are now quite scattered. Our eldest son, Morris, is married and lives in St. Louis, Mo. He has one child, a boy, three years old. Our eldest daughter, Janette, also lives in St. Louis. Our second daughter, Elka, lives in New York. Our third daughter, Rose, lives in Pittsburgh, Pa. All three have very respectable husbands and are doing quite well. Then we still have two boys and a daughter at home: Joseph, 18 years old; Alma, 16; and Leonhard, 14 years old. As for my circumstances, I make a good living for my family, but I can assure you that although I am now almost 64 years old I still have to work very hard, because the demands on me are great. You can easily imagine, when you marry off three daughters in two years, what that costs; furthermore, living in this country is very expensive. It would give me great pleasure if I could help your husband start a business, but at the moment it is impossible for me.

As for our brother, Lucas, he lives in Chicago. I hear very little from him. David now lives in New York with his children and they are doing quite well. Levi lives in Indianapolis, Ind., and is very poor, unfortunately. I send him money every month. I have heard nothing from our sister Jannette for years and actually don't even know where she lives. Give her my regards and tell her she should write to me some time.

I can't think of anything else to write for today. In the hope of hearing from you again soon, I send you and your family my regards.

Your ever-loving brother,
Meier



Meier Werthan of Rotenburg an der Fulda
and Nashville, TN, 1843-1914



The Port of Hamburg, from which Meier Werthan embarked on his way to the New World

Nashville Werthan Family Graves



The Werthan plots in the Nashville Jewish Cemetery



Father of the Nashville Werthan family



Minne nee Liebman was the wife of Meier Werthan

The Colorado Werthan Family By Susan Murawczyk

Unfortunately, we know very little about our family history. In fact, until I saw the movie *Driving Miss Daisy* and the sign for Werthan Bag Company, I didn't know there were any other Werthans out there.

The original Colorado Werthan was Solomon. He emigrated from Germany around 1880 and had a store in Leadville, Colorado, then a prosperous silver mining town in the mountains. He and his wife, Bertha nee Eliel, had four children, Esther, Sydney, Clarence and my Grandfather Alfred.

Solomon and his family moved to Denver when the children were still quite young. He was very active in Temple Emanuel and the Elks Club. Unfortunately, Bertha was killed by a streetcar. Esther helped raise her three brothers and eventually became a schoolteacher. Her married name was Lang.

Although I did hear the names of my Grandfather Alfred's siblings, I never met Sydney, and only saw Clarence once or twice. We did see Esther every once in a while. She was my Grandmother Werthan's best friend. They were both teachers and widows. In fact, my grandparents met at the funeral of Esther's father, Solomon Werthan.

Alfred Eliel Werthan was married to my Grandmother, Frances nee Rosenberg. He met her in Leadville, Colorado, where she was a teacher in a one room schoolhouse. We have no idea how she ended up in Leadville since she was originally from Liverpool, born in 1891, and had lived in Chicago and St. Louis, Missouri.

My grandparents moved to Denver when my father, who was born in 1920, was quite young. There was also a baby daughter, Bertha, but she died as an infant in 1917. We think Alfred was an engineer who worked for the railroad. He was evidently quite an outdoorsman. He even rode a motorcycle. Unfortunately, he came down with pneumonia after duck hunting, and died when my father, Gene, was only 6 or 7 years old.

After my grandfather's sudden death, our grandmother neither asked for nor received any help from anyone, including Alfred's brother, Clarence, who also lived in Denver. Frances Rosenberg Werthan was a school teacher most of her life. Small and feisty, she worked in inner city schools to support herself and my father.

Clarence Werthan, my father's uncle, was a successful businessman. He was the President of Rocky Mountain AAA, married to Francis, and had no children. In my entire life, I saw him only once or twice. I don't think he had any contact with my grandmother or father while he was growing up.

As an adult, my father did maintain contact with Esther Lang's children, Gilbert, Leonard and Evelyn.

My father, Gene Werthan, was serving in the Army when he married Helen Dveirin, of Denver. When I was born, he was stationed in India as a radio operator. For much of his life he was a general contractor. He loved playing bridge, was a Life Master

and also a bridge instructor, teaching on cruise lines around the world and at bridge centers in Denver until right before his death. He lived his entire life in Denver and passed away at the age of 79.

There are three children from the marriage of Helen and Gene: my brother Allan, my sister Wendy, and me, the oldest, Susan. Allan lives in Evergreen, Colorado, is married to Vanessa Valentine and has three children, Asher, Claire and Lily. Asher lives in Manhattan Beach, California. Wendy Werthan Berger lives in Denver, is married to Allen Berger, and has two daughters, Aliza and Sonia. Susan Werthan Murawczyk lives in New Jersey, is married to Carlos (born in Cuba) and has three grown sons, Richard and Chad, in New York, and Michael in Chicago.



Salomon and Bertha Werthan
Esther, Sidney, Clarence and Alfred
Ca. 1894, the year that Bertha was killed in a traffic accident

Ellen's note: Solomon was born Salomon Werthan in Rotenburg an der Fulda in 1849. He was the son of Sussman (Meschullam) son of Eiseman. There is more about Eiseman, brother of my ancestor Sussman, and his family, elsewhere in this work.

The Raymond Family of Oak Park, Illinois

By Sonia Raymond

Minerva "Minnie" W. Werthan was born 17 July 1876 in Nashville, Tennessee to William Werthan and Henrietta Gotthelf. Minnie died on 4 August 1955, Chicago, Illinois. She married Samuel Michael (Rahmer) Raymond 28 May 1893 in Chicago, Illinois, son of John Rahmer and Helen Michael. Samuel was born on 26 January 1872 in New York, New York. Samuel died on 31 July 1949 in Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois. He is buried at Mt. Emblem, Chicago, Illinois



(Note: Samuel and Minnie were married in a Jewish ceremony under the last name Rahmer, but around 1900, the name Rahmer was changed to Raymond.)

The children of Minerva Werthan and Samuel Raymond were:

1. Harry Harrison Raymond born on 23 November 1894, Chicago, Illinois and died on 5 August 1968, Williams Bay, Wisconsin.
2. Irene Evelyn Raymond, born 29 January 1899, Chicago, Illinois and died on 10 February 1957, in Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles, California.

Samuel and Minnie lived in the Oak Park, Illinois area for over 40 years. The last 28 years they lived at the Oak Park Arms Hotel. Minnie was very active in social and civic affairs. She was a member of the Victory Chapter, 810, Order of the Eastern Star and various clubs in and around Oak Park area. She was also the founder of Ray Oak Bridge Club at the Oak Park Arms. She continued to operate the news service after the death of her husband.

Minnie's husband, Samuel was the founder of the Raymond News Service at the Board of Trade in Chicago to dispense grain market quotations and news to brokers and dealers. He was a member of the Chicago Board of Trade for over 50 years. He was a member of the Chicago Press Veterans Association and several Masonic

organizations. During the First World War, he was a civilian recruiter for the United States Marine Corps, and was active in promoting the sale of Liberty Bonds. He was a member of the Patriots and Defense League of Oak Park and River Forest. He was a former president of the Craftman's Club and the Fellowship Club of the Board of Trade. In 1886, he entered the newspaper business as a reporter for the defunct Chicago Evening Mail, and he later worked for the Chicago Daily News, the Times-Herald, and the Record Herald as market and commercial editor. He covered the Columbian Exposition in 1893, and in 1934 was among a group of newspaper veterans of that Fair who were tendered an honorary banquet at the Century of Progress Exposition.

Harry Harrison Raymond married Blanche Viola Ross on 28 May 1923 in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Blanche was the daughter of William Ross and Ann Perchy. Blanche was born 13 February 1905 in Altoona, and died on 6 January 1988 in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. Harry Raymond was an account manager before becoming a member of the Cook County Liquor Control Board. He was a World War I Marine veteran and a member of the Oak Park Masonic Lodge, and also a member of the American Legion Post of Maywood, Illinois. His wife, Blanche, operated a small grocery store: Dairy Maid Food Store in Maywood, Illinois. They later moved to Williams Bay, Wisconsin and helped their son, Richard run a resort on Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.



Harry H. Raymond 1917-18
Bet. 1917 - 1918
Harry as a Marine in World War I. He went
overseas during WWI.

Irene Evelyn Raymond married Walter Calhoun Taggart, on 5 May 1917, Chicago, Illinois, son of John W. Taggart and Lucy McGuinnis. Walter was born on 5 August 1893, in Illinois, and died on 14 October 1948 in Los Angeles, California. Irene remarried to Roy Straehly.

Following is more background on the Rahmer family in the early generations:
Hirschel Rahmer, born 1760's, Rybnik, Poland

His children:

Sorel Rahmer, born about 1793, married Joseph Holander, 25 October 1813, Rybnik, Poland

Ester Rahmer, born about 1806, married Samuel Goldstein, 18 April 1826, Rybnik, Poland.

Simon Rahmer, born about 1810, married Marianna Reich, daughter of Jonas Reich and Pauline ?, 30 December 1828, Rybnik, Poland,. Marianna was born on 7 April 1815, in Weismar, Germany.

The children of Simon and Marianna were:

John Rahmer, born 21 December 1842, Germany. He died 27 May 1923 in Chicago, Illinois. John married Helen (Meikel) Michael, 25 Mar 1871, in Manhattan, New York. Helen was the daughter of Abraham Meikel and Dora Strumph. She was born on 19 December 1848 in Germany and died on 5 Mar 1917 in Chicago, Illinois. John and Helen are buried in Waldheim Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois. John worked as a glazier.

Additional Werthan Family Members in the United States

There is a long list of documents from the immigration and the years of the family in the United States, in particular US census records and WWI registration cards. I will not fill this book with copies of the documents, but they do serve to follow and document the family as they immigrated and moved from place to place. Two daughters and one son of Geisel remained behind in Germany, and there is more about their families in the material by Yosef Yashuvi, above.

We find an L. Werthan immigrating in 1854 at age 16, where his profession is given as "bootmaker", the family profession. My first impression was that this was Loeb or Levi, son of Geisel, mainly because he was the only "L" I knew to have emigrated. However, since he was born in May 1847, I have finally reached the conclusion that the L. Werthan on the above manifest was instead the brother named Lucas, who was born in 1837, and who may never have lived in Nashville. He arrived on the 19th of July, 1854 on the ship *Hermann* from Bremen to New York.

Levi did live in Nashville, but we don't know the details of how and when he arrived. In the 1870 census, he was found to be living with his brother Wolf/William and family in Nashville, and was working as a "clerk" in a store, presumably Wolf's store. The age given for him was then 16 (he should have been 23). From the page from *Beginnings on Market Street*, we know that Levi left Nashville in the early 1870s, and later we find him in Indianapolis, Indiana, with his wife Rebecca nee Lowenstein, and two sons. [The name Lowenstein was found in a record of the Mormons. These records of posthumous "conversion" to the Mormon religion, including others of the family have since been removed from the online, but not necessarily from the internal files.] In the 1900 census, for Lee [sic] and Rebecca Werthen [sic], they were all four living at 435 N. Noble Street. Levi may have taken part in the Alaskan gold rush, as I have written in a note in the passage written by Yosef Yashuvi (page 35, above). We have Meier's statement in his letter of 1907 to Elka that Levi was very poor, and was supported by Meier. There are documents of his son, Edward Sidney Werthan, born in Indianapolis on Feb. 21, 1881. In 1918 he was living in Beadle, South Dakota, working as a representative of a Ohio firm. Another son was Frank, who served in the US Army; he was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on July 22, 1885. Most likely, by the time he filled out his 1918 WWI registration card, his parents were no longer living. In 1918 Frank was working as a laborer at Navy Yard in Norfolk, Virginia. In the 1904 Indianapolis City Directory, the family was living at 513 Cincinnati Street.

My main source for most of the information below is US censuses at Ancestry.com.

Lucas (1837-1921), son of Geisel and Therese nee Apfel, in Chicago: he may have been named for his great grandfather, Lucas Sussman (Apfel). At Ancestry.com, there are two tax assessment documents for 1865 and 1866, which show Lucas residing in Chicago. In the 1910 US census, Lucas, 59, was living with his wife Zerlina nee Hochburger, 58, and their children: Theresa E., 30; Jacob, 28; Harry H., 26; Nora, 24; and Lena, 19. Lucas was retired; Jacob and Harry were traveling salesmen. In the 1920 census, there is no one named Lucas Werthan, although he died in the following year (see David, below). From census to census his children only added a few years to their age in the previous census. They continued to live with their father, with the exception of Lena. Upon further research, this family was not very successful in leaving descendants (as far as one can know). Jacob did not

marry; Theresa did not marry; Harry did not marry; nor did Nora. Lena married, but her two sons, Walton/Walter and Jerome, may be found in the 1930 US census, living at a "farm school" for the "feeble minded" (mentally retarded) in Godfrey, Madison County, Illinois. This family was without doubt well to do. Harry was the manager of the Chicago branch of the New York firm, Jerome Remick Co., a leading publisher of sheet music. The family's address in 1930 was at 5311 Michigan Avenue.

David in New York: I am grateful for the letter written by Meier, because I did not have prior knowledge of another brother who had immigrated to the US, and there were other David Werthans in Rotenburg. David is registered in the 1910 US census with his wife Theresa. Both are recorded as 66 years of age. All of their children were born in Chicago, so they resided there before moving to New York. David was a "salesman of carbon paper". Living with them were two daughters: Ida, 30; and Rosa Cahn, 34, with her two daughters, Alma, 12 and Dorothy, 7. Rosa was married (that is, not divorced or widowed), according to this registry, but there is no mention of her husband. David (1841-1917) was the son of Geisel and Deina nee Kaiser.

David Werthan in Chicago in 1920: was there yet another David Werthan residing in Chicago? I have lately reached the conclusion that all of the Chicago David Werthan documents and listings relate to the above David. By the time Meier wrote his letter, in 1907 (see page 57), the family with two daughters had moved to New York City. One document caused much wasted time and confusion, the 1920 census of Chicago. There we find a David Werthan with both the address and most of the family members of Lucas. David son of Geisel was no longer living in 1920. Lucas was still alive in 1920. Presumably this record is mistaken.

So in summary, five brothers immigrated to the US: Wolf/William, Lucas, David, Meier and Loeb/Levi.

In the censuses and other sources there are other Werthans. One family resided in Colorado. The parents of this family were Bertha (1856-1894) and Solomon (born 1849, in Rotenburg), son of Meschullam/Sussman Eiseman and Ester Werthan nee Tannenwald. Bertha and Solomon had four children: Esther, Alfred, Clarence and Sidney, all born between 1885-1891. Solomon lived in Leadville; later the family moved to Denver. Sidney was a chemist for a mining company, and he served as a sergeant in World War I. He died in 1968. There is more on this family on page 61.

Other Werthans originally from Rotenburg, and found in US records were not related, according to Dr. Nuhn. Some of them must have fled the Nazis previous to World War II. Among the Werthans arriving from Germany starting in 1937, we find Norbert, who was in contact with Dr. Nuhn, but he died before I was able to contact him, in 2002. There is more about this family in the chapter on the Shoah.

Early on, there was a black family in Georgia, but if they are descendants of relatives of a Jewish Werthan family, there is no way of knowing. There are also families of obviously Christian origin, though how they came to have the same surname, we will never know.

From what we do know, many documents concerning our ancestors' families are not currently available at www.ancestry.com. Even the US census documents are not complete.

Werthans Murdered in the Shoah According to Yad Vashem Online
(www.yadvashem.org.il)

Surname	Name	Father	Mother	Birth place	YOB	Nee	Spouse
Werthan	Alfred	Joseph	Peischen nee Goldschmidt	Rotenburg	1887		Else
Werthan	Else	Alfred	Clara nee Angres		1901	Hahn	Alfred
Werthan	Janette			Fliesen, SW of Fulda	1885	Goldschmidt	
Werthan	Theodor	Isaak	Jeanette nee Goldschmidt	Rotenburg	1926		
Werthan	Fani			Frankfurt	1895		
Werthan	Babette			Eschwege	1861	Hermann	
Chassan	Fannie (Pnina)	Yehuda	Julia nee Strauss	Darmstadt or Frankfurt	1904-8	Werthan	Shmuel

The above list is a composite, from different listings at Yad Vashem, a few Pages of Witness, mostly lists of deportees, with some data which I have from other sources. There is no way of knowing the exact facts. Sometimes the town in the column for "place of birth" contains the last town of residence before the Shoah. The Pages of Witness have been filled out by relatives and friends, sometimes many years after the Holocaust, and therefore it is logical to expect inaccuracies in the data.

It is worth noting that for Theodor, a new listing has appeared, which has allowed me to add his parents' names, and to connect him to Janette. His father's name was Isaak (Isaac), which led me to the conclusion, confirmed by Dr. Nuhn, that he was the son of the Isaak Werthan buried in the Rotenburg cemetery, who died in 1938. After leaving Rotenburg, Theo, as he was called in the new record, lived first in Kassel, then in Amsterdam. Another son, Norbert, immigrated to the United States, and therefore survived.

Babette also lived in Kassel. She was deported to Theresien/Terezinstadt in September 1942. Fannie Chassan was living in Den Hague, Netherlands. Fannie and Shmuel had five children; all members of this family were murdered.

The above Alfred was living in Berlin. Alfred was the son of Joseph and Peischen/Pauline nee Goldschmidt. So he was a distant relative, the great grandson of Judeman, brother of Sussman Werthan.

Many German Jews fled to the Netherlands, in the hope that they would escape the fascist Nazi government. When Nazi Germany conquered Holland, this turned out to be a false hope. Members of another family of our relatives, the Rosenthals, descendants of Elka Werthan, likewise fled to Holland. And several family members died in the Shoah.

I will mention the places where some of these people died. Alfred, Theodor, Fannie Chassan and Else Werthan died in Auschwitz. Janette died in Riga, Latvia; she was deported to Riga from Kassel in December 1941. Babette Werthan died either in Treblinka or Minsk. Fannie Chazan/Gazan died in Sobibor.



Alfred and Else Werthan

In June 2010, soon after this book was published, I was contacted by Sophie-D. Fleisch from Germany and France, who is the grand-niece of Else and Alfred, from the Hahn family. Sophie has written a couple of books in German about the Hahn family. She provides a picture of the lives of Alfred Werthan and his wife Else, from the above list of Holocaust victims. I don't know how Alfred came to live in Berlin, but it is possible that he went there because there was a facility to help him get an education in spite of his disability.

The following is from a letter from Sophie.

Alfred Werthan married Else Hahn. He was quite a lot older than she, but it's said in my family through oral history, they were very happy (the few years they had, therefore no children). Both were *taubstumm*, deaf-mute, and so it took a while to search for a husband/wife, who was also Jewish.

They lived in a big flat in Berlin city-center, which was well appointed with modern facilities especially for deaf-mute people, for example flash-signals instead of a bell. They also were often guests at her parents - Alfred Hahn and Clara (Claire), born Angress - in Alfred Hahn's Villa at Berlin-Wannsee, Hohenzollernstreet 6. This house was built by Hahn in 1927 as a meeting and vacation point in "good air" outside of sticky Berlin. (This house is still there and nearly untouched by time. Of course it was *arisiert*, Aryanized.)

The direct neighbor of Hahn (Hohenzollernstreet 7) was the famous painter Philipp Frank. An even more famous neighbor a little further away was the painter Max Liebermann, from whom Hahn bought one (or more) picture, which I am still searching for. I don't know where Alfred Werthan worked and what he earned, but his father-in-law was quite rich then. So some photos of holidays are left, one in Baden-Baden, South Germany, which was one of the poshest baths [spas] ever. Hahn was director of the Dresdner Bank Berlin, until they removed him from office for being Jewish. He only had this one daughter. Therefore you can imagine that Else and Alfred Werthan had a good life and no financial problems at all; in other words, there must have been a lot of furniture, paintings, etc. Not one single piece from the Werthan's material things survived the war/Shoah as far as I know.

And not a single bit of themselves:

Deported from Württembergische Straße 31 Berlin to Auschwitz, being deaf-mute and Jewish, they had not a miniature-chance to survive. There are no traces left at all

in Auschwitz as far as I know. In my opinion and as far as I know from other researches, history, studies about the standard practice of the Nazis and so on... they murdered Else and Alfred right from the ramp, without tattooing them, that means directly. People who cannot be found but were definitely in Auschwitz/Birkenau were given a consistent/standardized date after the war to mark their death.

Alfred Werthan, deported 01.03.1943, 31.Transport to Auschwitz,
Else, deported 12.03.1943, 36.Transport to Auschwitz.

Both Transports are transports belonging to so called "Fabrik-Aktion" (<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabrikaktion>) which means, they belonged to the last official Jews in Berlin.

Quote from the Original Deportations-"Akte":

"Evakuiert nach KZ Auschwitz durch Staatspolizei Berlin;

Kategorie: Jüdin;

Religion: keine Angaben;

Staatsangehörigkeit: keine Angaben;

Beruf: keine Angaben;

Häftlingsnummer: keine Angaben."

That means, "keine Angaben" [no information] in all matters, they did not even made the effort for registration...category Jewish, that's enough.

Also deported and murdered:

Alfred Hahn, Theresienstadt

Clara Hahn Theresienstadt/Maly Trostinez

Felix Hahn (brother of Alfred Hahn), Theresienstadt

Hans Hahn (brother) and wife Johanna Schalscha, 1941 shot in a mass grave in Riga

Fritz Hahn, son of Hans and Johanna, murdered with the whole Home for disabled children, but I don't know where yet.

Survived with others: my greatgrandfather Ernst Hahn (another brother) because he had married a Christian wife Lina Samberg and lived in Berlin.

I have also seen to so-called "Stolpersteine" [stumbling stones: see the mention of Gunter Demnig in the chapter on the Obermayer German Jewish History Award in this work-ES] for all 8 relatives at the streets from which they were deported. In the case of Else and Alfred Werthan it was a scandal...the stones were brutally removed the other day "and nobody had seen it", as always in Germany...We did it again, but before that I had to stop a Neo-Nazi-Website, on which they praised this "heroic deed"... wrote open letters and pressed criminal charges on "unknown"... which brought no result.

Ellen's comment:

The above is a very sad story, but I am grateful for having some details of the lives of two members of the Werthan family, and their relatives. Very often we know next to nothing of family members, who were taken out and shot into death pits. Each of the victims deserves to be remembered in some way.



The Max Lieberman painting
In the Hahn family's villa in Wannsee

Nathan Feldman: Number Four
Husband of Emma nee Werthan

Nathan Feldman arrived in the US on September 9, 1886, on the ship *Italy* from Liverpool to New York. He came from Lodz, Poland, where he was born in approximately 1867. This sounds straightforward enough: however, one of the great brick walls in my varied ancestry is Nathan Feldman, my great-grandfather. Both he and his brother Ben (Baruch aka Bennett) immigrated as Feldman—but we know this was not the original name, and have been unable to find out what the previous surname was. Likewise we do not know the given names of their parents. So for the time being, I must settle for research done from the time of Nathan's immigration.

The next date we find for Nathan is his enlistment date: on April 5, 1888, he enlisted in the US Army, at Philadelphia. According to his army record, he was Nathan Fellman, born in "Lutz, Russia", age 21, and was a tailor by profession. He signed his record with an X, which may only mean that he was illiterate in the Latin alphabet, but which also could explain the discrepancies in the name and place of birth. Why Nathan enlisted we can only surmise: maybe he sought "adventure"; maybe he sought a way to make a living, however meager. Nathan served until July 4th, 1891. His military record shows that he served in Companies K and L, 7th Cavalry.

This was the same 7th Cavalry which had suffered humiliating defeat in battle on the banks of the Little Big Horn River, in 1876. In what became known as the Battle of Little Big Horn, or Custer's Last Stand, the commander of the 7th, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, lost his life.

Nathan was stationed during part of his service at Fort Riley, Kansas. In 1890 his unit was sent to Indian Territory, and he found himself at what was later to become known as the Battle of Wounded Knee Creek (and also as the Massacre of Wounded Knee Creek), South Dakota. The Battle of Wounded Knee Creek may have been partly intended to restore the lost honor of the 7th Cavalry. It was to become the last major skirmish of the Indian Wars.

According to some accounts I have read online, at that time there was genuine fear on the part of the US authorities of what was called the "Ghost Dance" movement of the Indians, which was a kind of messianic, religious awakening. Some of its adherents believed that by a great flood, the white American settlers would be washed away; then the Indians, who by then suffered horribly from disease, hunger and poverty, including the loss of the great buffalo herds, would be restored to their rightful place. The Ghost Dance movement died at Wounded Knee Creek.

Before the battle began, the soldiers at the base counted out by fours. This story has been passed down in the family. Nathan was a number four, which means he was to remain behind at the base. For this reason, my family always considered the number four as our lucky number. While he was at the base, Nathan volunteered to accompany an officer, Lieutenant Preston, on a mission to the Pine Ridge Agency (Oglala Sioux reservation in S. Dakota). Later he was awarded a certificate of merit for this ride. To quote from a letter of recommendation in Nathan's military record:

"Captain L.R. Hare, 7th Cavalry, recommends this man for a certificate of merit for distinguished service under the following circumstances as related by the Regimental Adjutant of the Regimental Commander (Col. Forsyth).

"The Adjutant states that at the fight of Wounded Knee Creek, S.D., December 29, 1890, Private Fellman volunteered to accompany Lt. Preston, 9th Cavy. to the Pine Ridge Agency, that officer having requested the detail of a man to go with him. The Adjutant adds: 'I considered him (Fellman) at the time as worthy of reward in the shape of a certificate of merit and so reported to Captain Hare—the troop commander.'

"Colonel Forsyth approves recommendation of troop comdr. and says Private Fellman made the ride (16 miles) in one hour and on its completion fell from his horse exhausted; that when he undertook it, it was more than probably that hostile Indians would meet him on the way.

"The Dept. Comdr. also approves recommendation.

"A.R. 176 provides that 'certificates of merit will be awarded for extraordinary acts of gallantry performed by soldiers in the presence of the enemy.' Such certificate entitles the soldier to \$2 per month additional pay from date of act of bravery."

After his discharge from the Army, life was much more mundane. Upon his discharge, Nathan moved to Chicago, where his brother Ben also lived. They each married one of the Werthan sisters. Nathan and his wife Emma, born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1871, married in 1893, had five children in rather quick succession, and were very poor. Although Nathan was a skilled craftsman and picture framer by profession, he was not able to make a living framing pictures. They lived behind their store, a corner grocery across from a school, where they sold sandwiches to the schoolchildren at lunch break. According to my mother, the Feldman family was so poor, that the children even had to share shoes. Emma developed diabetes, about which too little was known at the time. Her doctor said that the best thing she could do for her condition was have more children, which is how Bill and Irene came into the world. For years, Emma had a wooden leg. She died on March 23, 1939, following a second amputation operation.

I was named for Emma. From the little I know about her, she must have been a very hard-working and pleasant woman.

All of Nathan's souvenirs from his army service, including a sword, were kept in a trunk in the basement of the family home. And all of them were eventually destroyed and discarded after a flood of the basement.

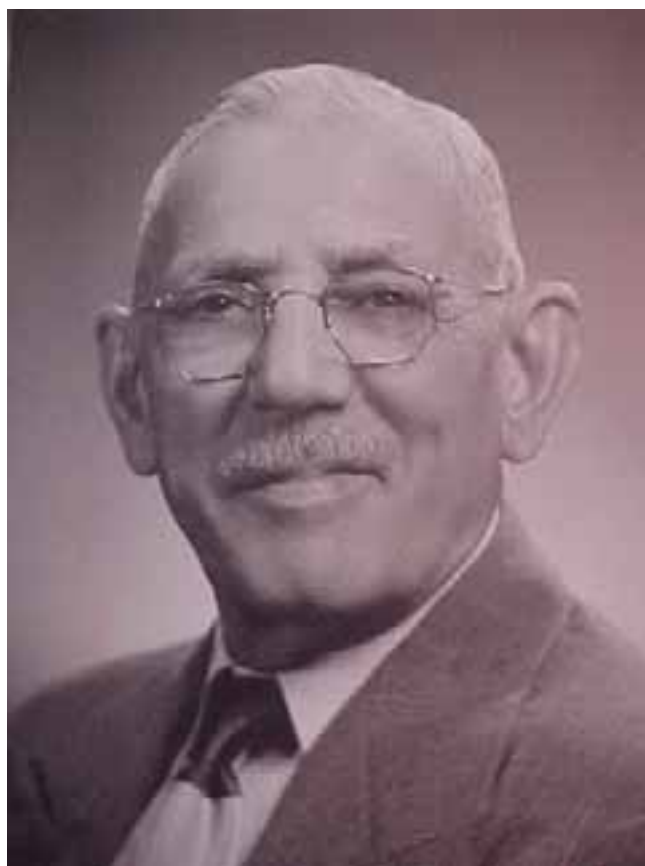
As a young girl of four or five, at my grandparents' cottage at Lake Wawasee, in Northern Indiana (we lived in Huntington, Indiana), where the family would gather in the summer, I remember sitting in the grass at the foot of Nathan's chair, listening to "Indian war stories". This is my only recollection of him. Of course there are many things we know now that we didn't know then. Then, some of our favorite movies and television programs were of "cowboys and Indians", and so it must have been exciting to the older granddaughters, having a great grandfather who had fought the Indians. I was seven years old when Nathan died, on January 22, 1954.

My great grandfather, a Jew from Lodz, came to America to find freedom and took part in the conquest of the West. He was a man who, because he was number four, lived to tell the tale.

[The above is an article I originally wrote for *Roots-Key*, the Summer-Fall, 2005 edition (volume 25, #2, pp. 44-5), the genealogical publication of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles, California.-ES]

Photo Album

Feldman Family Photos



Nathan Feldman



Emma Feldman nee Werthan, 1871-1939
One of very few surviving photos



Emma and Nathan Feldman



7 Feldmans

Theresa Shapiro, Bill, Tillie Hammerman, Esther Unger, Irene Goldstein, Hurley, Fannie Brenn



Standing: Bill Feltman, Jake Brenn, Esther Unger, Theresa Shapiro, Hurley Feltman
 Seated: Irene Goldstein, Fannie Brenn, Tillie Hammerman
 All of the 7 Feldmans at the 50th anniversary of Jake and Fannie in July 1965

The photos below may be from a wedding around 1940
 Possibly Earl Brenn and Ruth (Alpert)'s wedding on August 4, 1940



	Aaron Unger	Hurley Feldman	Harry Rosenblatt?	?
Nathan Feldman	Harry Goldstein?	Abe Schankerman	Bill Feltman	Mandel Hammerman
Art Shapiro	Benny ?	Bud Shapiro	Harry Horowitz	



Hurleen	Elaine	Bernice	Bess	Fran	Shirley	?	Annette
Feltman	Unger	Brenn	R.	?	Feltman	?	Feltman

Joyce	Irene	Dolores	?	Blossom	Lorry
R.	Feldman	Feltman	?	Hammerman	Brenn

If you are able to identify people not identified in the above photos, you are invited to do so.



3 Generations of Feldmans, ca. 1921
 Back row: Bill, Nathan, Irene
 Front row: Berenice Brenn, Earl Brenn

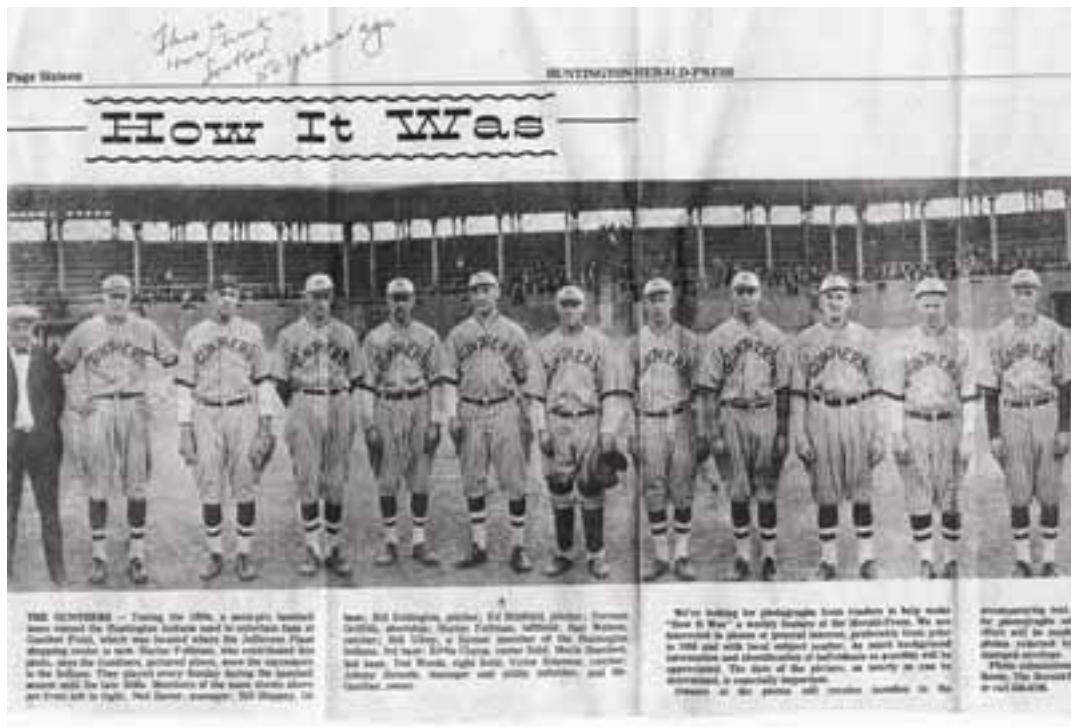


Photo from the Huntington Herald Press, 25 October, 1978
 The original is probably from the 1930s.
 The Gunthers were a semi-pro baseball team in Huntington, IN.
 They replaced an earlier team known as the Indians.
 A small arrow points to Hurley.

German Cemetery photos



The Rotenburg Jewish Cemetery



Monument at the entrance to the Rotenburg Jewish cemetery
in memory of the Jewish community
and those killed in the Holocaust



The Hofgeismar Jewish Cemetery



Sign at the Hofgeismar Jewish Cemetery

- 1695: cemetery established
- 1737: oldest known gravestone
- 1935: Last burial before WWII, of Hermann Heilbrunn
- 1946: establishment of the DP camp in Hofgeismar
- 1945 or 1946: The Holocaust memorial erected



The Bebra Jewish Cemetery
established relatively late in time
Earlier burials were in Rotenburg

Born in the USA: Descendants of Wolf and Henrietta

Letter Received February 11th, 1998

Sender: Irene Goldstein, Niles, Michigan

The following is in answer to questions about the family from me.

I was so very into genealogy, and here was a sister of my grandmother, but she just wasn't willing to think about old times and discuss them with me.

It is not true that we never met. I do remember seeing Irene, including at my grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary. We probably never met more than three or four times, however. Robert Marcus is the son of Harry Goldstein's sister.

[ES]

Feb 4, 1998

Dear Ellen!

My nephew Robert whom I rely on and gives me loving care and is always there when I need him and brings me joy, brought me your "Family Tree" letter. Amazed at the information you amassed.

Grandpa Feldman never mentioned another name but it could have been different.

I recall Aunt Theresa & Uncle Ben Feldman [brother of her father Nathan, and she was the sister of Emma Werthan—two sisters who married two brothers]. My information is the same as Earl's and Berenice's. Never heard why my grandparents moved to Chicago from Nashville. Presume it was to make a better living. Don't know if they knew anyone in Chicago.

Grandpa Feldman was grown up [when he came to the US], because he joined the army shortly after coming to the U.S.A. The only names I know are Uncle Ben and Aunt Theresa Feldman, Werthan and Feldman.

As to Earl's comment we lived on Hermitage Av. Not Armitage and I inherited her [Henrietta Godhelp Werthan] love for coffee. There is a different street called Armitage Av.

My birthday is Dec 17, 1911

Grandma Feldman died Mar 23, 1939

Grandpa Feldman died Jan 22, 1954

Sorry to hear Berenice has Parkinsons and of Earl's loss.

Glad you and your family are well and Best Wishes to all and "Hello" to your folks in Indiana.

Love,
Irene

P.S. Just don't remember attending the 50th wedding anniversary of Jake & Fannie but do remember your Mom's and Dad's big beautiful rustic home in the country setting, doubt I saw you grownup.

Notes from a Visit with Elaine Brooks, in Oak Park, IL, August 2-3, 1999

On the above dates I made a special visit to Oak Park to visit the above first cousin of my mother, Elaine Brooks nee Unger.

The family of Aaron & Esther (Estelle) Unger occupied the house at 1002 So. Elmwood St. in Oak Park, IL. from 1933-1985. Hurley Feltman helped them take over the house during the Depression, when Ben Feldman (brother of Nathan) was no longer able to afford it. He owed back taxes, and Hurley stepped in with the offer that the Ungers take on the house. Hurley took it upon himself to pay off the debts on condition that the Ungers take care of the elderly relatives. Among them were Theresa and Ben Feldman, Emma and Nathan Feldman. Bertha Fischer nee Werthan also lived there. Later Elaine Brooks nee Unger and her children moved back into the house when her husband Jerry died, and they lived there with her parents.

Regarding the Ben Feldman family, I have the names of four sons (Edward, Joseph, Alfred Arnold and Irving Harald), but Elaine only remembers two. All of the brothers appear in the 1910 and 1920 US censuses, so they did live to adulthood. In 1917, Edward, single, was a clerk at Marshall Field's. There is family data for Joseph and Alfred. The family resided at 4533 Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL. At one time, relations were strained in this family.

After Emma had her first leg amputation, she stayed in the house for a while, until she recovered and was able to use her wooden leg. Elaine recalls being afraid of the prosthesis.

Bertha Fischer had a son named Major. He disappeared. [I have not found him in any records.-ES]

Esther/Estelle Unger, Elaine's mother, was proud of being the only Feldman sister to marry in a wedding gown.

As to Elaine, she was married only four and a half years when her husband Jerry died. Her children were then ages three and a half and ten months.

Nathan, Tillie and Hurley were great Chicago Cubs [baseball] fans. Hurley played baseball but not professionally. He drove Checker cabs. He was the head of the family. Hurley was generous but somewhat bossy. He seemed to want to run peoples' lives. He used to say that they would have great luck for all they did for the older generation. Fannie (sister of Hurley) Brenn helped out when Emma lived in the house, but wanted an accounting for how the money was spent. Aaron Unger once lent \$5000 to Hurley, considering it an investment, but Hurley insisted on repaying him.

Irene Feldman Goldstein was different from the others. She was not much of a cook. In Chicago she worked as a secretary at a fruit market. [Indeed the 1930 census gives her occupation as a stenographer at a wholesale fruit company.] She was very intelligent. Esther said that she was smart in the business world, but dumb in her choice of men. Harry worked for the railroad, and they weren't well off. Irene's first husband, Lou Levitsky, was a playboy, and all of the family opposed the marriage. It lasted at most five years. Then Irene stayed with Esther and the family for a few years.

During the years of the "nursing home", there were beds all over the house, including the dining room. Ben and Theresa had the back bedroom, Aaron and Esther had the middle bedroom, and the kids were in front. There was also a daybed which opened up. Ben died first. It got to the point that they all went to nursing homes (or died)—by the time (ca. 1944) that Elaine was sixteen.

Regarding others in the family, in brief:

Theresa (Feldman nee Werthan) was a very good cook.

Minnie married Sam Rahmer, who changed his name to Raymond. They didn't have much to do with the family. They had two children. They were "rich" and lived at the Oak Park Arms Hotel. They did come to visit the sisters.

Bertha was the "odd ball". Elaine learned from her: Bertha knew about the "finer things in life", and taught Elaine "table manners, all the proper things." There must have been money on her husband's side. She thought she was better than Emma and Theresa. Elaine thinks Bertha was envious of her sister Minnie.

Aaron Unger, Elaine's father, had a coffee shop, which served breakfast and lunch. Esther used to work there part time—Elaine thinks partly she needed to "escape" the "old age home" atmosphere at home.

Ida Horowitz [Feltman]'s father had a candy store. Ida was Hurley's wife. They were poor. Ida had a sister Bessie, and a brother Maurie. They were from Chicago. But of course in later years Hurley and Ida were not poor at all.

Family addresses in Chicago (some street names have since changed):

Year	Who	Address
1900	Bennett Feldman & family	55 Hastings Street
1910	Nathan Feldman & family	621 So. Wood Street
1910	Bennet Feldman & family	181 Jackson Street
1920	Nathan Feldman & family	731 So. Hermitage Ave.
1920	Bennet Feldman & family	94 W. Jackson Blvd.
1930	Nathan Feldman & family	3756 Windsor Ave.
1930	Bennet Feldman & family	1002 South Elmwood, Oak Park, IL

Following is a basic map of the burials in the family plot in Chicago (photos of some of these gravestones on pages 89-90):

Rose Winefeld Feldman ???	Aaron Unger
Albert ? Feldman [perhaps Alfred]	Esther [Feldman] Unger
Nathan Feldman	
Emma [Werthan] Feldman	
Wolf Werthan	Bennet Feldman [Baruch]
Henrietta [Godhelp] Werthan (no stone)	Theresa Feldman
Bertha Fischer	Mandel Hammerman
	Monument

Fannie nee Feldman and Jake Brenn

It is an honor to write about my grandparents. These were my mother's parents. Jacob Leib Brenn was born in Pinsk, then part of Russia, today in Belarus. He was born ca. 1895, and he chose the birth date of April 15th. He immigrated to the US with his mother Mariam and brother Moishe in 1907, and the family lived in Chicago. The head of the family, Leizer, had immigrated a couple of years earlier. I vaguely recall a story about a fence Jake used to climb to go earn some money—was it selling newspapers?

In any case, Jake did his best to fit in, and became American in every way. He went to school and studied, but I somehow get the feeling that he was one of those immigrants who was very much autodidactic (self-taught). That is, he had a thirst to better himself by learning. He was ambitious from early on. He was very tall for those days, 6'3", and was also good looking. It was no wonder that Nathan Feldman, his neighbor, hoped that Jake would choose one of his daughters to marry.

And he did. Jake married Fannie, daughter of Nathan Feldman and Emma nee Werthan, who was about the same age as himself, in 1915. They must have been the only Jewish couple married on Tisha B'Av in those days. Tisha B'Av is a Jewish day of mourning for the destruction of the First and Second Temple in Jerusalem. The Rabbi had made a mistake in setting the date; the father of the bride insisted that the wedding be celebrated as planned.

Around the same time, Jake studied chemistry for a year or more at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. He learned the chemical business, and worked for a company in Chicago. I don't know the details, but at some point, Jake decided, with some Chicago friends perhaps, to go into business for himself. The beer brewery building in Huntington, Indiana, was available, and local people were looking for anyone to take it over and develop an industrial plant, after an earlier false start. (The brewery was closed because of Prohibition. Someone who had been hired to establish a manufacturing plant there, had absconded with the investment money.) It is possible that the owners or the people of Huntington, Indiana, advertised in the Chicago newspapers.

I have copies of other papers regarding the development of the company, but Jake wasn't a Werthan, so I won't go into this any further. The company, Huntington Laboratories, which manufactured sanitation products for institutions such as hospitals and schools, was founded in 1920, when Jake was 25. Huntington Labs., as the company was called, remained mostly within the family for over 70 years. One of the reasons for the end of this situation derived from the fact that Jake and Fannie had mostly (7) granddaughters, and only one grandson. The "heir" became a son-in-law of Earl, Jake's only son (two daughters didn't count). Therefore, the rest of the family who still owned stock in Huntington Labs., found themselves tied to the company when they reached the age when they would rather have had the money. However, the stock, not traded on any kind of open market, was undervalued.

Jake, or J. L., as he was often called, and Fannie, stayed in Huntington, Indiana, for the rest of their lives, though toward the end, they wintered in Florida, and did some traveling around the world.

Jake always commanded respect from the people who worked for him. He never took a very big salary, relying on dividends from his Lab stock to supplement his

salary. His one big luxury, aside from travel, was a pink Cadillac I remember well. Otherwise, he and Fannie were great contributors to worthy causes. During the Great Depression the company fared pretty well, because everyone still needed its sanitation products. And when people turned to Jake for loans, he was often able to help out. When Jake died in 1967, people came forward with their stories of how he had assisted them. In true Jewish tradition, no one had known about it; that is, he had never even told the family about this help. He was also active in community affairs. Perhaps I am exaggerating, but to me he seemed a giant of a man, a born leader and manager.

On a more personal level, Jake wanted to send me to Israel in the summer of 1966, and I turned him down. He didn't live to know that I ever came here, for the first time in February 1968. On another note, I remember Jake often playing "giddyup" with some grandchild on his knee. Still another of my memories is the phrase, "It's a face only a mother could love on Sunday."

Fannie was not one to live in the shadow of her husband, even if she didn't work outside the home. She was without doubt the matriarch of the family. At home, she was very much in charge. She worked hard to keep their home in mint condition. And she volunteered at the Red Cross. At the lake, where we all congregated for part of every summer, she set the tone, and demanded a high level of cooperation and good behavior from all the grandchildren. This was not always easy on us. A "grannyism" I recall: "fussbudget".

We all owe a great debt to Jake and Fannie.



Jake and Fannie on their wedding day in 1915

Lorry and Hy Goldenberg

And a Bit about Earl and Ruth Brenn

Lorry Brenn, youngest daughter of Jake and Fannie, was born in 1922 in Huntington, Indiana, a town of 16,000 population, to which her family had moved in 1920. All of her years of growing up were spent in Huntington. She had more or less made a vow that she would never come back to live there after college, but life sometimes has a tendency to get in the way. Lorry graduated second in her high school class, then went on to study at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. There she majored in Latin American Economics, graduating cum laude. At the university Lorry met her lifelong best friend, Anita (Neesh) Levinsohn of Paterson, New Jersey (who probably never gave Huntington a second thought).

They were students in the war years, and among the useful things that Lorry studied was Morse code. After completing their studies, Lorry and Neesh attended summer school at the City University of New York. Then Lorry moved to Washington D.C., where she worked for the US government, under Nelson Rockefeller, who then headed the Latin American division of the State Department. Lorry had intended going to work for the US Government in Buenos Aires, Argentina, but people dissuaded her because of the anti-Semitic atmosphere there at the time. Anyway, Lorry fled Washington, or should I say not Washington, but the low salary and the bed bugs.

About the same time Earl Brenn, Lorry's brother, had planned to join the 10th Mountain Division of the US Army. He had managed the Denver branch of Huntington Laboratories, the family manufacturing company. Earl had married Ruth Alpert, a resident of Denver, who thought that Huntington, Indiana was about the last place she'd ever live. Lorry was invited to move to Denver to take over management of the company there.

Anyway, maybe because Earl was married with two small daughters, the Army never did take him. And Earl and Ruth soon moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, in order to be close to the company, which after all, it had been Earl's lifelong dream of managing. This was a compromise between them. Fort Wayne was a small city, but a city nonetheless, with a ballet company and cultural events, and a country club, and it was only 25 miles away from Huntington, so that Earl could easily commute. And they lived there for the rest of their lives.

Meanwhile, upon Lorry's arrival in Denver, in spring of 1944, her sister-in-law and brother soon "encouraged" her to attend a dance at the Jewish community center, where she promptly met Hy Goldenberg, a soldier in the 10th Mountain Division, recovering from snow blindness. Theirs was a great love story, and exactly three months later, they were married. Dad was issued a week's leave from the Army to cross the country by train to tell his family in Massachusetts that he was getting married, then to return to Indiana; Lorry had a few days to plan a wedding, which took place at her parents' home, during that same week. Soon after that, of course, Hy was sent by the Army to Italy to fight in the Appenine mountains.

Hy was by way of inheritance a furrier, and he had worked in the family fur business, both before and after his military service. But by that time, furs were no longer worn as much as before, and it was harder to make a living as a furrier, especially in a depressed former mill town named Lawrence, Massachusetts. In the long run, Hy, the great nature lover, would never have remained a furrier anyway.

Around the time I was born, in January 1947, Hy was invited to go to work for Huntington Laboratories, for which he was extremely well suited. Among the functions he filled at the company were managing the sales force, and advertising.

Frankly I personally take some kind of weird pride in the fact that on my birth certificate it says Lawrence, Massachusetts, not Huntington, Indiana, as if it makes any difference. At the age of about four months, I too moved to Huntington.

My mother's second cousin from Chicago, Bernie Kroot, had come to visit Lorry, in Madison, I think, and fallen in love with her best friend Neesh. This was another wartime romance, and Bernie was in the Air Force stationed in Florida before going overseas, when Neesh went to visit him. The last thing Mom said when Neesh left was "Don't get married" and the first thing Neesh did in those few days in Florida was to get married. But this is not about Neesh, only to say that Neesh too ended up in Huntington, IN, married to Bernie Kroot, who became the CFO of the family business, and they were both my parents' best friends until they parted this world too early. In the mid-1950s the Kroots and my parents bought some forest land together along the Salamonie River, where we spent a lot of time on weekends, until the land was requisitioned for the Salamonie Reservoir in the mid-1960s.

Hy and Lorry became very busy with many volunteer activities. The list is very long, so I will not burden the readers with the details, except to mention some of the important ones. Both were active with the Girl Scouts; Hy headed the annual United Fund appeal for many years. And he was on the Library board, and headed the campaign to build a new, successful, city library; Lorry was President of the PTA. Both volunteered early on for ACRES, which lobbies for environmental issues and manages land to be kept natural in perpetuity. And they donated much of their own forest homeland for this purpose, which is now a nature reserve named Tel-Hy.

Lorry was also very well known for her high level of handwork, as a weaver and a knitter of the highest caliber. For years she attended knitting camp with some of the best knitters in the US. All of the fabric for the curtains and upholstery in their very special woodland home were "the fruit of her loom".

Dad retired early from the company, at age 62, and we all wondered how he would keep himself busy, but of course in the long run, Lorry and Hy had a wonderful retirement life. They bought their second home in Zichron Yaakov, Israel, where they spent on average five months of the year beginning in 1982. They made many friends, and had a very active life in Israel. At first they attended Ulpan Akiva in Netanya, where Mom learned Hebrew, and Dad was well known for his cartoons (not for his Hebrew). Dad volunteered, along with his brother Norman, to help train Israeli soldiers in winter warfare on the Hermon, in 1974-5. Dad volunteered at the Mizgaga Museum at Kibbutz Nahsholim, by the sea. The museum has exhibits on marine archeology. On the seashore near the kibbutz, he collected old bits of wood and glass and pottery, weathered by the sea, and developed a unique kind of assemblage.

Dad died in February 2000, and Mom continued to go to Zichron for the winter, until her health deteriorated. She and Dad had long said that when the time came, they would prefer to be in Indiana. Luckily in Huntington is a fine facility for old-timers, and Lorry knows many of the residents from her many years in Huntington.



Lorry and Hy Goldenberg ca. 1976



Standing: Lorry Goldenberg nee Brenn, Hy Goldenberg, Earl Brenn
 Seated: Berenice Schankerman nee Brenn and Ruth Brenn nee Alpert
 Earl mentioned that his Hebrew name was Avraham Hirsh,
 Most likely he was named for someone from his father's family.

Family Graves in Chicago



Wolf was the father of the family
Henrietta nee Gotthelf is buried in the family plot but has
no gravestone



Emma was a daughter of Wolf and Henrietta
She married Nathan Feldman



Nathan Feldman
Husband of Emma nee Werthan
Brother of Ben
There is a question of when Nathan was born.
I believe that 1867 was a more likely birth year.
Nathan arrived in the US on 9 September 1886.



Bennett (Baruch) Feldman
 Husband of Theresa nee Werthan
 I am left with a question: did Ben have a previous wife
 with whom he immigrated (Gitel, age 18, 1886)?
 Two Feldmans, Nathan and Baruch, each immigrated
 at different dates in 1886, on the same ship, *Italy*.
 I assume that this Baruch was the brother of Nathan, Ben in the US.
 Baruch, arrival 13 October 1886, was the older of the two.



Theresa Feldman nee Werthan
 Born in Tennessee
 Wife of Ben



Bertha nee Werthan was a daughter of Wolf and Henrietta
 She married Louis Fischer

Dr. Heinrich Nuhn of Rotenburg an der Fulda

Following is the original letter from Dr. Nuhn.

Dear Ellen Stepak,

I've just got your E-mail which you sent to the Rotenburg Geschichtsverein in December 2002. I have lots of information on the Rotenburg Werthans. To be of some help to you I need some detailed information on the first names of the Werthans who were your ancestors.

I'm the author of the booklet that you referred to in your mail to the Geschichtsverein. It was published a year ago, its ISBN number is 3-933231-18-3. On page 20 you can find the tombstone of Sußman [Sussman] Werthan with the transcription of parts of the Hebrew inscription on it. Sußman, who was the local MOHEL*, died in 1862. He owned a wonderful house in the Brückengasse.

Please inform me about the sort of information you are looking for. In case your Rotenburg interest is not limited to collecting genealogical dates then I would think the best thing for you to do is to come and see us here in Rotenburg. We haven't got a big house, but there is always a room and a bed resp, beds for visitors whose ancestors belonged to the Rotenburg Jewish community. My wife has the reputation of being a talented cook even though she has not had a professional training in that field. You'll not be the first visitor from Israel in our house.

If you want to learn more about my activities you can visit our homepage: ag-spurensuche.de.

With kind regards I'm looking forward to your answer.

Yours,

Heinrich Nuhn

*A *mohel* is one who circumcises Jewish baby boys on their 8th day.



The ancient and impressive City building
in Rotenburg, on Markt Square
--the same building in which the Jews
were in charge of cleaning the toilets



Dr. Heinrich & Inge Nuhn, Ellen & Zvi Stepak and the Vice Mayor
In front of the Rotenburg town hall

To quote from the website of the Obermayer German Jewish History Awards (www.obermayer.us/award/awardees/nuhn-eng.htm), Dr. Nuhn was always fascinated with history. He became a high school history teacher, but as his children grew, he began to focus more on research. "In the '80s he wrote his doctoral dissertation on anti-Semitism in the Rotenburg region. Later, when an exhibit prepared by students from his school provoked denials of the existence of anti-Semitism in Rotenburg during the Nazi era, he reacted forcefully. 'The researcher in me felt challenged,' he remembers 'Who, if not I, should refute that charge?' Nuhn spent two years in the archives investigating Rotenburg's Nazi-era history. In 1993, he presented his findings, exposing the myth of a Nazi-free Rotenburg."

For those interested in more information about the Jews of Rotenburg and the vicinity, there is a website in German, www.mikwe.de. Among the information at this site is detailed data on much of the Jewish cemetery of Rotenburg, or as it is called in German, the *Friedhof*.

Journal of Four Days in Rotenburg an der Fulda in August 2003

This trip was the culmination of ten of the most fantastic genealogical months anyone could wish himself. It all began with the Avotaynu week in Salt Lake City last November, where I had decided that if there is only one thing I can accomplish, it would have to be discovering the towns my German ancestors came from. No more spending a few hours in Fort Wayne at the Allen County Public Library once every two years...this was going to get me moving forward.

And it has been beyond my greatest expectations. I have already described my success in finding out about the ancestral homes and my family's vital statistics in the article I wrote for *Sharsheret Hadorot*, and so will, without further delay, begin my account of the trip.

Still, to begin properly, I must give a bit of background. While in SLC, a young woman who works there from Germany, helped me identify Rotenburg an der Fulda, and she found the municipal website on the Internet. There, she found mention of a booklet about the Jewish community of Rotenburg, by Dr. Heinrich Nuhn. I wrote to the city, and they passed my email letter to Dr. Nuhn. At the same time, I wrote to GerSIG mentioning my families and my towns, and received a couple of important responses. One of them was from Wolfgang Fritsche, giving me some more information on the family. The second was from Maggie Linz, whose husband is from the Linz family of Rotenburg, recommending I contact Dr. Nuhn.

Eventually I heard from Dr. Nuhn. And to my surprise (and slight embarrassment), he invited us to come and spend a few days at his house, doing research on my family (see the above letter, page 92). Since we are somewhat shy, and not accustomed to staying at the homes of people unless they have a B&B, we didn't know how to react. Still, we did decide to take Dr. Nuhn up on his kind offer, a decision we never regretted for a moment. In this, I must mention that his wife Inge is a wonderful partner, and a gracious hostess. The food was excellent, and so was the company. Also, it was fortuitous that the guest room was downstairs, and we really didn't need air conditioning, or I might have had to commute from G-d knows where every day, in order to accommodate Zvi's need for A/C.

Sunday, August 3, 2003

Since I had traveled first of all to the US for the IAJGS (International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies) conference in Washington DC, and then to Indiana for a visit with the family, Zvi and I decided to meet at the Frankfurt International Airport. He preceded me by about five hours, but he couldn't be sure that I'd arrive, until I did, because I'd phoned him the evening before from the Fort Wayne International Airport to tell him that I would probably miss the plane. When miraculously I made the flight from Chicago, after three and a half hours' delay in Fort Wayne, there was no way to tell him, because by that time he was himself on a plane from Israel. Zvi had guessed that if I hadn't left a message about my travel plans, I had probably made the flight to Frankfurt from Chicago after all. It was good luck for me, as the flight from Chicago was also delayed, to Lufthansa's dismay, by a minor glitch (no emergency lights in the cabin, we were told). So, as soon after landing as I could, I hooked up my cell phone for Germany, and called Zvi to tell him I'd arrived.

In the end the flight was just fine, only my bag did not arrive with me. Luckily I always pack with this possibility in mind, but there is a limit....another call to Zvika to tell him why I'd been detained...

We met at the EuropCar counter, where we arranged to pick up our rental car, a black Opel Astra, five-door, with air conditioning, which we were going to need and appreciate in the heat wave which never left us during all our visit to Germany. And we set off in the direction of Fulda. I had from the outset preferred we not rush to Rotenburg, but take time to recover from our respective flights, sleepless nights and jet lag. Since my own ordeal had really exhausted me, this turned out to be a wise decision. We found the only hotel in Fulda with "air conditioning", the Ibis, which was fine (**), but the A/C wasn't really very good. We had dinner at a good Italian restaurant across the street from the hotel.

Monday, August 4 From Fulda to Rotenburg

In the morning I had to buy myself a few basic necessities, like pajamas, but as soon as we could, we took off in the direction of Rotenburg, arriving there before noon. We had taken Dr. Nuhn's suggestion to meet at the main "Markt Square".

The Market (Markt) Square was lovely. Aside from the municipal building, which itself is beautiful, all around were half-timbered, really ancient buildings (some of which may even have been occupied by our ancestors), and a big old church. For a while, Heinrich and we waited for each other, until I guessed that I saw him at the curb, looking towards the main street. My hunch was correct, and so we met and introduced ourselves. We followed Heinrich in our car to his home. There, we carried our bags in, and had lunch with Heinrich and Inge. Thus began a routine of eating Inge's excellent food; and keeping *very* busy between meals. On our first day, Heinrich took us on a tour of Jewish Rotenburg, pointing out important homes and other buildings, with an accent on former Werthan homes. The most tantalizing thing we heard was about a document from 1622; after 50 years of Jews being banished from the town, Jews were once again allowed to reside in Rotenburg. The first Jewish settlers were allowed on certain conditions, such as that they clean the municipal toilets, and that they lend a horse to the mayor, and pay double taxes. The Werthan house was next to the Radhuis (Rathaus, municipal building) There was a "letter of protection". The names on the document are as follows:

Levi and his wife and four children
David and his wife

According to Heinrich, the only Rotenburg family with many Davids was the Werthan family. As I had already discovered, there were *very* many David Werthans on the family tree of later years. (There were also a couple of Levis.) But bridging the gap from 1622 will be a challenge, if at all possible.

Dr. Heinrich Nuhn is a high school teacher of history and literature. He is just retiring. He is also a walking encyclopedia of Jewish history in Rotenburg and the small towns in the vicinity. He even has lists of which Jewish family occupied which home in which years, but we may have to return there in order to get all of this right.

The ability to spend any and every hour of the day on family research was beyond unusual. Heinrich had copies of many documents from Rotenburg in his personal

archives, which have enabled him to do his research work. Also he has photocopies of advertisements from the local newspapers, going back to the 1860s. They remind me of the ad from 1869 in the Nashville City Directory [on page 55 of this work], placed there by my great great grandfather, Wolf (William) Werthan. One example Heinrich gave us was of an ad by a Jew named Leopold Alexander, for bathtubs. "Bathe at home," it proclaims. Some of the local competition called this unfair business practice. However, obviously these people were just a little ahead of their time. Most of the Werthan ads were placed by a Joseph, David or Sussman. By this time, my own Werthan ancestors had immigrated, and so were not among those who placed the ads; however, they were cousins of my ancestors.



Newspaper advertisement from 1900 for "New! Bathe at home!"
from a store on Brückengasse Street



Notice in the local newspaper about David Werthan
taking over management of his father Sussman's store for manufactured goods
on Brückenstrasse 51, Rotenburg

Early in his research, Dr. Nuhn had been annoyed at the degree of arguing among themselves that he found among the Jews. Eventually he realized that this was part of the character of the Jews, and that in fact, it generated some interesting historical documents.

Another subject which Dr. Nuhn mentioned was the building of the local synagogue, in 1738. Until that time, there was a private synagogue belonging to one of the original families (David?), but there was discontent over the way it was managed. So the community needed a new synagogue. This was built without a building permit, and a fine was imposed on the Jewish community, which was to be paid off over a long period. In the end, the community avoided paying part of the fine.

Tuesday, August 5 Rotenburg

The days were punctuated by "have you found my bag?" calls. It really did begin to appear that it wasn't going to show up, though I was aware of the rarity of this. Finally on the third day it did arrive.

Today we went up the hill to the Rotenburg cemetery, which is located between a hotel and a clinic. At the entrance to the Jewish cemetery is a smallish Holocaust memorial, which Dr. Nuhn was instrumental in erecting. Dr. Nuhn had prepared for us a list of 26 Werthan gravestones, with pages describing them in detail, in Hebrew with a German transcription. He had mapped them, so that they were fairly easily located. In one of my photos of the sign for Rotenburg, one can see the area in the background. The graves are upright, and the cemetery is well-maintained, despite a very sloping site. The graves were put upright by people from the town. I was appreciative of this—after visiting towns in Belarus and Lithuania with few or no gravestones (though Vabalninkas in Lithuania is a notable exception). One grave is the grave of Sussman son of David, my great great great great grandfather. Sussman, born in 1762, died in 1828. Another is of Geisel (Yosef) Werthan (1806-1888) son of the above Sussman, my 3X great grandfather.

The cemetery has two sections, the older up above, and the newer one down the hill. Geisel's grave is in the "newer" section, and it is in excellent condition, considering that he died in 1888. Apparently quite a few tombstones are missing or still lie buried at the site. The Jewish authorities do not allow digging, in any case. However, I have been in touch with genealogists involved in research at other venues, and the Rabbis there have allowed uncovering gravestones, so long as they are put upright at the very same place. What remains of the Rotenburg cemetery is dignified and impressive.

Later we went to see the exhibition on the Jews of Rotenburg in the local middle and high school. There are exhibits representing daily life in Rotenburg. There is a section on Jews serving in the German army in WWI. There is a tapestry, which was actually quite well known during WWII. It bears the date 1934, and was done by local women, section by section, and later assembled. It portrays different homes and Nazi soldiers. On the roofs of most of the homes are flags with the swastika. Even on the roof of the Lutheran church, next to the cross, is the swastika flag. Heinrich showed us a photo from the Nazi years, of the tapestry next to the pulpit in the church, from which services would have been conducted.

Dr. Nuhn showed us a list of taxpayers from 1884, and Salomon Werthan was among the biggest taxpayers, meaning one of the highest earners.

There is a list of Rotenburg Jews who from 1675 provided goods for the Leipzig fair. One of these was David Koppel, in 1730, 1734 and 1735. Another was David Heinemann from 1759 through 1762.

There is also a "dark" room to commemorate the Shoah. One enters a darkened room exhibiting old newspaper articles and photos from the Shoah. Gradually Dr. Nuhn increased the lighting. There is the photo of one memorable young local girl, who was the daughter of a Jewish man and a German non-Jewish woman. The wife and mother swore that the girl was not the daughter of the German, but was the product of an adulterous liaison. She lied in order to save the life of her daughter. Somehow this worked, and the girl survived.

In another room was an exhibit on the events of 1848, and comparing the anti-Semitism of that time with 1938 and Cristallnacht. There was an axe, symbolizing this parallel.

From the school, we went to the former mikve, or Jewish ritual bath, building by the Fulda River. The house had been converted into a residence, but it was in bad condition. It still is. They had been excavating inside, in order to uncover the mikve itself. The work has stopped until they get professional advice from an archeologist on whether there is another mikve underneath the one they have uncovered....As may be seen in the chapter about Rotenburg in 2006 by Libby Werthan, there was indeed another very old mikve under the newer one.

Wednesday, August 6 Kassel and Hofgeismar

En route to Kassel, we stopped briefly at the village of Heinach.

We left at 9:30 in the morning and returned at 19:00. The trip to Hofgeismar from Rotenburg takes around an hour and a half.

In Kassel we stopped at the Jewish Center, which includes a small school, where children are taught in the afternoons in small groups. Each child attends the school once a week. The teacher travels between towns. The center serves a community of nearly 800 Jews, most rather recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The synagogue at the center is modern, beautiful and simple in design, with a cool blue hue to it. Altogether, one gets the impression that the center was built at a reasonable expense, not just "on a shoestring". We met the director, who showed us around. He had lived a few years in Israel, and knows some Hebrew. They have a small library, a small auditorium and a kosher kitchen, but they don't deal with meat. Today there are three Jewish communities in the area which was Hesse-Kassel: Fulda, Kassel and Marburg. There are half a dozen communities in southern Hesse.

From Kassel we traveled to Hofgeismar, another pretty town with many half-timbered homes. The municipal building there is large and impressive, and also appears very old. We once again climbed the hill to look for the cemetery near the local hospital. Heinrich picked up the key at the hospital and got directions there on where to find it. Finally we did.

The cemetery is well maintained, as were all of the three we visited in the vicinity of Rotenburg. There is an older part and a newer part, and one gets the distinct feeling that many gravestones must be missing. In the old part, most gravestones have no surnames. There was too much sun while we were there, and so the older graves have taken on a strange golden color in my photos. I did photograph most of the gravestones, but did not think of this as a documentation project. Only I thought that maybe at a later date, when I have time to absorb everything, I might be glad for documentation of potential "cousins".

There are about 125 gravestones in the Hofgeismar Jewish cemetery. Not all of them commemorate local people; there were a number of graves for displaced persons from Poland, who had arrived after World War II, and had died particularly in 1946 and 1947. There had been a camp for DPs (displaced persons) in Hofgeismar. It appears that the surviving DPs left the camp by the end of 1947. There was also one larger monument to the Holocaust with soap made from Jews buried under it (although I'm uncertain whether this was actually done). Dr. Nuhn believes that this

was a symbolic reference to the fate of the Jewish people, whose bodies were used for "economic" purposes. The memorial was erected after the Holocaust, in 1946.

In the first row of the newer section, I came across one monument which caught my eye. It was for Reisgen, wife of Itzig Gotthelf. My first reaction was, "I found it!" But on second thought, I didn't allow myself to get too excited, as it said she was the daughter of Meshulam, not Sussman. Later, that evening, Heinrich showed me a listing of a Sussman grave, where it stated that the deceased man was "Meshulam known as Sussman". That clinched it. The grave was of a pink sandstone, and the writing was clear, considering that Rosgen died in 1879. She was my great great grandmother, born in Rotenburg an der Fulda, maiden name Werthan.

Afterwards, we had lunch in the small cafeteria of the hospital, and from there we went to the Museum in Hofgeismar, where Heinrich had arranged to meet with Helmut Burmeister at 15:00. Dr. Michael Dorhs, a clergyman who has done research on the local Jewish community, was away on vacation. [In 2009 he received the Obermayer German Jewish History Award.]

The museum has a separate section on the Jews. There is a list of Jews from the region killed in the Holocaust. There are photos from newspapers, and other exhibits on the lives of the Jews. There is a beautiful model of the synagogue and the school, which were destroyed. There are lists of guild members, which include both Jews and non-Jews, but quite a few of them were Jews. Nowhere is there a sign of the Gotthelf family, who, after all, left in the 1850s and 1860s, with the exception of Elckel/Emilie, who may have remained, but who married Meier Goldschmidt.

Until the mid-19th century Hessen-Kassel had the largest Jewish population by percentage of the German states. After the Thirty Years' War, in 1648, much of Hessen-Kassel was in ruins. At that time, the Huguenots and Jews were welcomed in the region, to help with the rebuilding. Many then arrived from the Rhine region.

On our way back to Rotenburg, we made a brief stop in Baumbach, and Heinrich showed us where the synagogue used to be. Today it is a residence. And he told us about Cristallnacht in Baumbach.

In the street near the synagogue, he met an elderly German, who lives in a house opposite the former synagogue building, and who spoke to Heinrich incessantly, telling him about what had happened during the war. (Later Heinrich told us that this same man had been much more reserved, and even hostile, in years past.)

In the evening, once again we sat with the papers. Heinrich solved the dilemma of Meshulam, and showed us a paper signed by Sussman Werthan from 1808, when he received the surname Werthan. This was during the Napoleonic years, when all Jews were, luckily for us, required to adopt surnames.

Thursday August 7 Rotenburg municipality and Bebra

Today was our last morning in Rotenburg. At 9:30 we had a date to meet with the deputy mayor in the municipal building. The mayor himself was away on vacation. The building itself gave the impression of being very ancient. There were wooden rails in the ceiling. We climbed upstairs to a conference room, where we were seated at a long table. At one end, next to me, was a newspaper reporter. Also, the municipal archivist sat on my other side. The deputy mayor began by speaking

openly about the past. He said he had lost a socialist uncle in the war. It was a dignified meeting, and after his remarks, the archivist presented me with copies of some very old photos and a small pictorial book of the history of the town. Then the reporter asked me a few questions. I told him how we were pleased to see how the town has preserved its very old buildings, and also to find the cemetery in such good condition. I forgot to mention the importance of the cemetery to the Jewish religion, but Heinrich later did this. After the interview, we went down to see the municipal archives, where they keep some really ancient books, among other documents. Afterwards we all went down to the Markt Square to have our pictures taken.

At 11:00 we returned to Inge and Heinrich's house, where we had a small meal, then all four of us left for Bebra, where once again we visited in the local cemetery, which is located on the outskirts of town, in a somewhat industrial area. Altogether, there were in the neighborhood of 100 gravestones. There were quite a few gravestones with the symbol for Levi on them, which seemed to be concentrated around one head of the family named Benjamin Halevi. Also some of these also bore the name Appel/Apfel. It was obvious just from the gravestones that what Heinrich had said was right, about the Appels being the most prominent family. Several of the Halevi/Appel memorials were high and of black marble. Another avenue for me to explore....as there are Appels on our family tree, going way back. Heinrich told us that Bebra was an important railway town, and that the Apfels owned an agency for emigration.

In each case, Heinrich Nuhn had to get a key from someone in order that we could enter the cemetery. So it is worth keeping this in mind before going to visit such places. Also, they are mostly not marked, and there is little chance of finding them without a guide.

Then we said good-bye to Inge and Heinrich, and suddenly recalled that we were just about out of gas in the car. So we stopped at a station, and Inge and Heinrich left us there. And words are not enough to thank them for all they did for us.

The Obermayer German Jewish History Award



Gunter Demnig, Heinrich Nuhn, Robert Kraus, Ilse Vogel, Arthur Obermayer, Wolfram Kastner
The five winners of the Obermayer German Jewish History Award, 2005

We are proud to have been part of the process of nominating Dr. Heinrich Nuhn for the Obermayer German Jewish History Award, and are very glad we attended the awards ceremony in Berlin. The ceremony took place on January 27, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, at the Berlin Regional Parliament house. Aside from Dr. Nuhn, four other deserving people received the Award.



Dr. Nuhn and Arthur Obermayer

Gunter Demnig, of Cologne, is probably the best-known of the five, for his "stumbling stones" (*stolpersteine*), on the sidewalks of many German cities. They are small metallic blocks imbedded in the sidewalks at the residences of Holocaust

victims, and give the names of the victims. [Recently, I have heard that the *stolpersteine* may be found in other countries as well.]

Robert Kraus, a sportsman, was present at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972, when eleven Israeli athletes and trainers were murdered. He has since been active in promoting understanding through sports exchanges between Germans and Israelis.

Wolfram Kastner, of Munich: "He has provoked people, especially in Munich, through public actions into reexamining Germany's past," in the words of Arthur Obermayer.

Ilse Vogel has dedicated many hours to the research of the former Jewish community of Diespeck, and has reconnected many of the descendants around the world.

Journal of Some Days in Berlin and Sachsenhausen

We arrived in Berlin in the morning of Sunday January 23rd 2005. We first of all looked for our daughter Raquel, who was waiting for us in the lobby of the Intercontinental Hotel. The weather that day and all the days of our visit was snowy. But we learned to enjoy it, because there was something like an inch of snow each day, and it wasn't so cold that we suffered from it. On the contrary, we Israelis enjoyed seeing snow, Raquel for the first time, except for Mount Hermon, but the snow hadn't been falling then.

Raquel had arrived a couple of days earlier, because she needed to return before us, to take an exam at Tel Aviv University. She hadn't done much but study, so one of the first things we did was return to the Jewish Museum, to see it again with her.

Raquel was interested in the Jewish aspect of things, which I was glad to discover. In the museum there were many things which she knew more about than I did, from her university studies. She also wanted to see the Holocaust Memorial, which, if you went to the Brandenburg Gate, would have been hard to miss. We went right up to it, though it is still fenced in. It appears to be pretty much finished, though of course we don't know what the situation is underground, where people will also visit. The official opening is scheduled for May.

Third, Raquel had expressed a desire to see a concentration camp. I had been pretty sure that most of these were farther east, and Zvi and I had seen several of them, but I found that Sachsenhausen was not far from Berlin, and it is a museum, so we decided to try to visit it. When we failed to find a taxi driver who knew what we were talking about, and with whom we could communicate, we looked at pamphlets, and Raquel spied one with a trip to Sachsenhausen, so we signed up for this on Tuesday morning.

It was so much better going with someone familiar with English and familiar with the territory. Guy Laurie from South Africa was a wonderful guide. We went in his car, the three of us. I won't go into detail, but Sachsenhausen was both a labor camp and a transit camp, from which people were sent to death camps, especially Auschwitz. But plenty died there, either executed, or from starvation and disease. There are exhibits in different buildings on the site. Most of it was destroyed, and probably most of what we saw had been rebuilt.

We also took the circle tour of Berlin again. I was glad to do it, because I had the feeling that I really didn't know the city. We only got off at the Brandenburg Gate, which is when we saw the memorial.

That evening we had a splurge meal at the hotel's fancy restaurant, Hugo's. It was the first time we had eaten at a Michelin star restaurant.

We had known in advance that we wouldn't be seeing Heinrich and Inge Nuhn before the activities of the Obermayer group. On the afternoon of the 26th, we went to the group's hotel, the Excelsior, where we met everyone. From there we went by bus to the Berlin Parliament, Abgeordnetenhaus, where there was a press conference in honor of the Obermayer Award. There we got a copy of the awards booklet, which I read later that day, and was extremely impressed with the biographies of the winners. Meeting them personally during the day and a half we were together, impressed us as well. At the press conference they mostly spoke in German, but Karen Franklin and Arthur Obermayer spoke in English.

The evening of Wednesday the 26th was the banquet. We had a long cocktail reception first, and we spent much of the time talking with Heinrich and Inge. The food was not exceptional, but who was there for the food? At dinner we each gave a little talk about ourselves, except, for instance, I spoke for the three of us.

The next morning we met again at the Excelsior, and took off by bus to tour the eastern part of Berlin again. By now I realized that I was beginning to see the picture of the city pretty well. We had a good guide, Ronnie Golds, of Jewish background with an interesting life history, having begun as an English Christian, unaware of being Jewish. He was sent to one of those English boarding schools, so he had a "proper English education" until the age of twelve, I think. Then his father, who Ronnie said was something like "99% German, and a little bit Jewish," suddenly decided to return to Germany. So he was suddenly given the choice of staying in the boarding school, or moving to Germany, an idea which he detested, but maybe a little less than boarding school. So he is perfectly bilingual and bicultural. But he still refers to himself as British. It was good to hear some of the Jewish history, in contrast to the general bus tours we had taken.

Lunch was at a magnificent place called the Opernpalais. There were close to 30 of us, I think. After lunch we continued to tour Berlin, beginning with former East Berlin, and then touring West Berlin. We returned to the Excelsior about 4 p.m., then quickly returned to our hotel to dress for the evening awards ceremony. Our bus left the Excelsior about 5:20.

The awards ceremony took place in the chamber of the parliament itself. Each of the awardees, in alphabetical order, gave an acceptance speech in German, and prior to the awards, there were speeches by the president of the Berlin parliament, Arthur Obermayer and a historian who had also lived in Israel, Prof. Michael Wolffsohn. There was simultaneous translation. The ceremony was opened with and included excellent piano playing by Vladimir Stoupel.

After the official ceremony, we proceeded to another part of the building, to a reception for everyone, including a buffet of small sandwiches and soup.

We returned by bus to the Excelsior.

The next day, Friday, Raquel left very early in the morning for Israel. We had a date to meet Heinrich and Inge at the Centrum Judaicum, in the Neue Synagogue, at 2 p.m. But we all forgot that this was Friday, and therefore it closed at 2 before the Sabbath. Luckily for Heinrich, he and Inge arrived at 1:30, and so dashed in for a quick visit. We missed it but had already seen it on our previous visit.

Instead we walked over to the Deutsche Geschichte Museum, the German Historical Museum, where we saw an interesting special exhibition. It was entitled Myths of Nations, centered on WWII, and was comprised mostly of film clips from many nations who had participated in the war, either the Germans, the Allies or conquered countries. The exhibit showed clearly what I have often said, that everyone was a partisan, everyone opposed Hitler, nobody collaborated. Especially the Russians: they really anger me with their rewriting of history. But even the Lithuanians and others present themselves as victims only.

We sat at the small temporary "cafeteria", if you can call it that, and Heinrich gave me a photo of part of the *mapa** he is translating for the museum, for Raquel to try and figure out at the university. It has been translated, except for one symbol, of what looks like a glass container of oil or something else, with the word "Hashem", meaning the Lord, on it. We discussed the possibility of our going to Rotenburg in September, for the official opening of the archeological part of the *mikve*, but we have so many things going on, that we are unable to even consider this at this point in time. After five p.m. Heinrich and Inge left to go by bus to the train station, to catch their train to Rotenburg, and we returned to our hotel. At the museum, we happened to meet Robert Kraus and his wife. He is one of the Obermayer winners...

We left on the morning of Sunday, January 30th.

And that was the end of a memorable trip to Berlin. Thanks to Heinrich. Thanks to Arthur Obermayer.

*A *mapa* is a cloth used in the circumcision of a son, which is later embroidered and used in the bar mitzvah ceremony of the same boy. According to an exhibit at the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv, this is specifically a German Jewish custom.

The Family Tree of the Jews of Rotenburg

In early September 2006, as Libby Werthan has related above, some forty Jews traveled to Rotenburg an der Fulda from several different countries, to attend the official opening of the Hall of Remembrance in the former community's mikve building on September 10th. This building had served as a regular home since the Jewish community had ceased to exist in 1938. When the house was put up for sale around the year 2000, following a campaign to convince the City of Rotenburg to purchase it, the city did.

Members of the families of those coming to Rotenburg for the Hall of Remembrance opening had already traveled there in recent years, and now they brought additional relatives with them to share in the experience.

Although the visitors came from different families, in many cases, we have found at least one marriage link between them. One clan was the Katz family from Israel, another the Linz family from Belgium, and there were also members of the Katzenstein family, and Wertheims. There was also a member of the Delavie family, whose ancestor was a court Jew, or *hofjude*.

The next logical step in our research might be to combine our resources, and to create a "family tree" of the town of Rotenburg and surrounding villages. And this should be possible, as there are good mid-19th century vital records available, and many people are researching their families, although earlier records, before surname adoption in 1808, are not easy to find.

On Possibilities for Further Research

The story of the Werthan family in Germany and in the United States and Israel is an interesting story. But have we reached the end of the research of this family back in time? It is very likely. Yet I will always hope for more about the ancestors, both going back in time and filling in more details about their lives. There is always the faint hope that someone will come forward with an old memory book or a diary of a member of the family, or that Dr. Heinrich Nuhn or another researcher will stumble upon new sources of information.

Surveying the situation, however, I am satisfied with what has already been accomplished. Seldom is a genealogical project of a regular family, not a family of a famous rabbinical dynasty, so successful. It is not because of me, but because of the fact that there are more than the usual sources of information available, thanks to the German propensity for keeping full and accurate records, and thanks to my partnership with Dr. Nuhn.

Some questions remain open; but the greatest question of all is the one I have posed in this work, of whether the family dates back to the 1622 Rotenburg *schutzbrief*. Chances of researching even further back before 1622 are slim. One possible source of information is the local cemetery, and I fervently wish that the Jewish religious officials in Germany who are in charge of Jewish cemeteries will one day allow uncovering of the gravestones which lie buried in the cemeteries.

There is always the possibility that this is not the final edition of the Werthan family saga, and that someone after me will build upon the foundations set by this book, will write about later generations, and will correct mistakes in this edition. Some Werthan descendants may recall that they have some great old photos in a shoebox. Or a member of yet another branch of the family may contact me with more information, about his own branch of the family, or about another branch with which I have not had contact. In any case, in the future, I will appreciate updates and additions to the family tree, and family stories not included in this book, because I just may get around to revising the book myself.

Things that are easily researched today may become precious irretrievable facts in the future, just as things which might easily have been researched twenty years ago are now lost.

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An old post card of Rotenburg
View across the bridge over the Fulda River, 1905

Family Trees

Updated in August 2010

From the Werthan Family Tree on the last pages
three Generations have been omitted
in the interest of privacy

WERTHAN Family Early Generations

... 1 David
 2 Salomon David (WERTHAN) (1695 -)
 3 David Salomon (WERTHAN) (1730 - 1787)
 + Elckel (1738 -)
 4 Sussman David (WERTHAN) (1762 - 1828)
 + Elcke (Elckel) Sussman (APFEL) (1766 - 1841)
 5 Lucas WERTHAN (1794 - 1859)
 5 Gumpel (Mordekhai) WERTHAN (1796 - 1866)
 + Mirjam (Marjan) LINDAU (1800 - 1873)
 5 Reisgen (Roschen) WERTHAN (1802 - 1878)
 + Itzig GOTTHELF (1804 -)
 5 Geisel (Yosef) WERTHAN (1806 - 1888)
 + Dinchen? APFEL (1806 - 1836)
 + Therese APFEL (1806 - 1840)
 + Deina KAISER (1808 - 1854)
 5 Salomon WERTHAN (1808 -)
 4 Eisemann Isaak David (WERTHAN) (1763 - 1843)
 + Beila/Beilchen KATZ (1772 - 1848)
 5 David Eisemann WERTHAN (1799 - 1871)
 + Zerlina (Sarchen) STIEGLITZ (1797 - 1837)
 + Ester ECKMAN (1807 - 1891)
 5 Mundel Eisemann WERTHAN (1802 -)
 5 Meschulam (Sussman) Eisemann WERTHAN (1806 - 1862)
 + Ester TANNENWALD (1811 - 1864)
 5 Mirjam WERTHAN
 + Sussman SCHURNEMANN
 5 Leiser WERTHAN (1812 - 1882)
 + Diena TANNENWALD (1814 - 1860)
 + Taubchen WERTHAN (1837 - 1866)
 5 Susmann (WERTHAN)
 4 Judemann David (WERTHAN) (1768 - 1847)
 + Gutel (Judl) HESS (HESSBERG) (1776 - 1864)
 5 Reichel WERTHAN (1804 - 1888)
 + Geisel LINZ (1795 - 1866)
 5 David Judemann WERTHAN (1806 - 1881)
 + Reichel or Reicha KATZENSTEIN (1810 - 1868)
 5 Kalman WERTHAN (1808 - 1838)
 5 Salomon WERTHAN (1810 - 1889)
 + Beila (Beilchen) KATZENSTEIN (1816 - 1892)
 5 Gumpel (Mordekhai Moses) WERTHAN (1816 - 1871)
 + Rosgen HESS (1821 -)
 + Behsge (Betti) LINZ (1832 - 1853)
 5 Judgen WERTHAN
 4 Gumpel Marcus David (WERTHAN) (1775 -)

Lucas Sussman (APFEL) Family Early Generations

... 1 Sussman
..... 2 Lucas Sussman (1730 -)
..... 3 Elckel Sussmann (APFEL)
..... + Sussman David (WERTHAN)
..... 4 Reisgen (Roschen) WERTHAN (1802 - 1878)
..... + Itzig GOTTHELF (1804 -)
..... 5 unnamed GOTTHELF (1834 - 1834)
..... 5 Sussman (Sigmund) GOTTHELF (1835 - 1895)
..... + Bertha LIEBMAN (1851 - 1921)
..... 5 Jacob GOTTHELF (1838 -)
..... + Bertha FRANK (1845 -)
..... 5 Jette (Henriette) GOTTHELF (1839 - 1925)
..... + Wulf (William) WERTHAN (1835 - 1901)
..... 5 Ester GOTTHELF (1841 - 1842)
..... 5 Elkel (Emilie) GOTTHELF (1842 -)
..... + Meyer GOLDSCHMIDT (1843 -)

Wulf APFEL Family Early Generations

... 1 Wulf APFEL (- 1832)
 + B (Beilchen?) APFEL APFEL
 2 Dinchen? APFEL (1806 - 1836)
 + Geisel (Yosef) WERTHAN (1806 - 1888)
 3 Wulf (William) WERTHAN (1835 - 1901)
 + Jette (Henriette) GOTTHELF (1839 - 1925)
 4 Theresa WERTHAN (1867 - 1944)
 + Baruch (Bennett) FELDMAN (1864 - 1942)
 5 Edward FELDMAN (1892 -)
 5 Joseph FELDMAN (1894 -)
 + Estelle S. UNKNOWN (1893 -)
 5 Alfred Arnold FELDMAN (1898 -)
 + Clara UNKNOWN
 5 Irving Harald FELDMAN (1898 -)
 4 Sigmund (Sidney) WERTHAN (1869 -)
 4 Emma WERTHAN (1871 - 1939)
 + Nathan FELDMAN (1870 - 1954)
 5 Tillie Rose FELDMAN (1894 - 1978)
 + Mandel TREIBISH (HAMMERMAN) (1890 - 1963)
 5 Fannie FELDMAN (1895 - 1968)
 + Jacob (Yankel) Leib BRENN (1895 - 1967)
 5 Theresa FELDMAN (1897 - 1993)
 + Arthur SHAPIRO (1893 - 1954)
 5 Harold (Hurley) FELDMAN (FELTMAN) (1899 - 1989)
 + Ida I. HOROWITZ (1900 - 1988)
 5 Esther (Estelle) FELDMAN (1900 - 1982)
 + Aaron UNGER (1899 - 1976)
 5 William (Bill) FELDMAN (FELTMAN) (1910 - 1999)
 + Annette HARRIS (1912 - 1995)
 5 Irene FELDMAN (1911 - 2004)
 + Lou LEVITSKY
 + Harry GOLDSTEIN (1904 - 1978)
 4 Bertha WERTHAN (1872 - 1946)
 + Louis FISCHER
 5 Major FISCHER
 4 Minerva (Minnie) WERTHAN (1876 - 1955)
 + Samuel Michael RAYMOND (1872 - 1949)
 5 Harry Harrison RAYMOND (1894 - 1968)
 + Blanche Viola ROSS (1905 - 1988)
 5 Irene RAYMOND (1899 - 1957)
 + Roy STRAEHL (- 1973)
 + Walter Calhoun TAGGART (1893 - 1948)

GOTTHELF Family of Hofgeismar Early Generations

... 1 Itzig (1730 -)
 2 Jacob GOTTHELF (1756 - 1837)
 + Roschen HESKEL (1760 - 1846)
 3 Itzig GOTTHELF (1804 -)
 + Reigen (Roschen) WERTHAN (1802 - 1878)
 4 unnamed GOTTHELF (1834 - 1834)
 4 Sussman (Sigmund) GOTTHELF (1835 - 1895)
 + Bertha LIEBMAN (1851 - 1921)
 5 Jacob C GODHELP (1872 - 1946)
 + Caroline STEARN (1876 - 1941)
 4 Jacob GOTTHELF (1838 -)
 + Bertha FRANK (1845 -)
 5 Sigmund GODHELP (1867 -)
 5 Henry GODHELP (1869 -)
 + Ester BERNSTEIN (1877 -)
 5 Ester GODHELP (1871 -)
 + Moses HORNSTEIN
 4 Jette (Henriette) GOTTHELF (1839 - 1925)
 + Wulf (William) WERTHAN (1835 - 1901)
 5 Theresa WERTHAN (1867 - 1944)
 + Baruch (Bennett) FELDMAN (1864 - 1942)
 5 Sigmund (Sidney) WERTHAN (1869 -)
 5 Emma WERTHAN (1871 - 1939)
 + Nathan FELDMAN (1870 - 1954)
 5 Bertha WERTHAN (1872 - 1946)
 + Louis FISCHER
 5 Minerva (Minnie) WERTHAN (1876 - 1955)
 + Samuel Michael RAYMOND (1872 - 1949)
 4 Ester GOTTHELF (1841 - 1842)
 4 Elkel (Emilie) GOTTHELF (1842 -)
 + Meyer GOLDSCHMIDT (1843 -)

The FELDMAN Branch of the WERTHAN Family

All Known Descendants

... 1 unknown FELDMAN
 2 Baruch (Bennet) FELDMAN (1864 - 1942)
 + Theresa WERTHAN (1867 - 1944)
 3 Edward FELDMAN (1892 -)
 3 Joseph FELDMAN (1894 -)
 + Estelle S. UNKNOWN
 4 Marie FELDMAN
 4 Mozel FELDMAN
 4 Allen J. FELDMAN
 3 Irving Harald FELDMAN (1898 -)
 3 Alfred Arnold FELDMAN (1898 -)
 + Clara UNKNOWN
 4 Winnifred FELDMAN (1918 -)
 2 Nathan FELDMAN (1870 - 1954)
 + Emma WERTHAN (1871 - 1939)
 3 Tillie Rose FELDMAN (1894 - 1978)
 + Mandel TREIBISH (HAMMERMAN) (1890 - 1963)
 4 Blossom Henrietta HAMMERMAN (1928 -)
 + William KANOUSE
 5 Laura Beth KANOUSE (1951 -)
 + Murray BERG
 6 Heather BERG (1985 -)
 5 Audrey Gail KANOUSE
 + Ken ERDE
 6 Jennifer ERDE (1980 -)
 + Ken HILLBORN
 6 Jeffrey HILLBORN (1989 -)
 6 Justin HILLBORN (1991 -)
 5 Steven Gregory KANOUSE (1959 -)
 + Kristi CRAWFORD
 6 Sean KANOUSE
 6 Ashlee KANOUSE
 3 Fannie FELDMAN (1895 - 1968)
 + Jacob (Yankel) Leib BRENN (1895 - 1967)
 4 Berenice BRENN (1916 - 1999)
 + Abe B SCHANKERMAN (1906 - 1982)
 4 Earl BRENN (1917 - 2001)
 + Ruth A. ALPERT (1921 - 1997)
 5 Susan BRENN (1942 -)
 + Gary MULLENIX
 6 Addie Elizabeth MULLENIX (1970 -)
 + Glenn Todd BERGER
 7 Nathan Todd BERGER (2001 -)
 7 Ella Rose BERGER (2003 -)
 7 Oliver Lloyd BERGER (2009 -)
 6 Jenny MULLENIX (1971 -)
 5 Bonnie BRENN (1944 -)
 + William WHITE
 6 Megan BRENN-WHITE (1974 -)
 + Robert LANGHORNE
 6 Maris BRENN-WHITE (1979 -)
 5 Janet (Janni) BRENN (1946 -)
 + Frank SCHNEIDER
 5 Lorry (Lolly) BRENN (1953 -)

..... + Joel TARTELL
..... 5 Lisa Beth BRENN (1955 -)
..... + Jerrold ELKIN
..... 4 Lorraine (Lorry) BRENN (1922 -)
..... + Hyman (Hy) GOLDENBERG (1918 - 2000)
..... 5 Ellen GOLDENBERG (1947 -)
..... + Zvi STEPAP (1946 -)
..... 6 Avner STEPAP (1974 -)
..... + Michal BLUTMAN (1977 -)
..... 7 Maya Lorry STEPAP (2003 -)
..... 7 Shira STEPAP (2007 -)
..... 6 Amir STEPAP (1979 -)
..... + Jill Cristil ALLENBERG (1982 -)
..... 6 Raquel STEPAP (1982 -)
..... + Yair WERDYGER (1980 -)
..... 5 Sherman GOLDENBERG (1949 -)
..... + Karen SPRANDEL (1954 -)
..... 6 Nathan GOLDENBERG (1983 -)
..... 6 Danielle GOLDENBERG (1985 -)
..... + Garrett BOVA
..... 6 Jacob GOLDENBERG (1991 -)
..... 5 Nan GOLDENBERG (1955 -)
..... + William E. PLASTERER (1954 -)
..... 6 Lorry PLASTERER (1989 -)
..... 6 Jenny PLASTERER (1991 -)
..... 3 Theresa FELDMAN (1897 - 1993)
..... + Arthur SHAPIRO (1893 - 1954)
..... 4 Burton (Bud) SHAPIRO (1926 - 1981)
..... + Jone SCHAFER (1928 -)
..... 5 Scott Arthur SHAPIRO (1955 -)
..... + Linda GLICKMAN (- 1988)
..... 6 Adam SHAPIRO (1982 -)
..... 6 Allia SHAPIRO (1986 -)
..... + Colleen JUSTUS
..... 5 Brent SHAPIRO
..... + Abbe GAMSON (1959 -)
..... 6 Samantha SHAPIRO (1993 -)
..... 6 Nicola Tarice SHAPIRO (1997 -)
..... 4 Roslyn SHAPIRO (1921 -)
..... + Joseph BLOCK (1921 -)
..... 5 Mark Ralph BLOCK (1948 -)
..... + Terri WINOGRAD (1950 -)
..... 6 Joshua Ben WINOGRAD BLOCK (1982 -)
..... 6 Leah Rachel BLOCK (1985 -)
..... 5 Philip Steven BLOCK (1951 -)
..... + Judy IVRY
..... 6 Asa Jonas IVRY BLOCK (1988 -)
..... 6 Anina Belle IVRY BLOCK (1992 -)
..... 5 Robert Nathan BLOCK
..... + Catherine CHANDLER (1954 -)
..... 6 Sarah Jean BLOCK (1986 -)
..... 6 Aaron Chandler BLOCK (1988 -)
..... 3 Harold (Hurley) FELDMAN (FELTMAN) (1899 - 1989)
..... + Ida I. HOROWITZ (1900 - 1988)

..... 4 Shirlee FELTMAN (1924 -)
 + Irvin SCHECTER (1924 -)
 5 Kathy SCHECTER (1950 -)
 + Bob SASS
 + Dennis SHORTRIDGE (1948 -)
 6 William SHORTRIDGE (1985 -)
 6 Living SHORTRIDGE (1988 -)
 5 Bobbe SCHECTER (1955 -)
 + Jeffry WHITE (1953 -)
 6 Korey WHITE (1989 -)
 6 Nicklaus WHITE (1991 -)
 4 Hurleen FELTMAN (1928 - 2010)
 + Bernard (Bunny) BLUMENTHAL
 5 Sandra Rae BLUMENTHAL (1952 -)
 + Steven BEKTELL
 6 Tessa Jo BEKTELL (1985 -)
 5 Dana Beth BLUMENTHAL (1955 -)
 + Robert C. KNAPP (1955 -)
 6 Joseph Corman KNAPP (1992 -)
 6 Christa Ilizabeth KNAPP (1997 -)
 6 Iyla Naomi KNAPP (1999 -)
 5 Suzi BLUMENTHAL (1956 -)
 + Randolph (Randy) TRACY (1955 -)
 5 Janet Ileen BLUMENTHAL (1962 -)
 4 Dolores FELTMAN (1931 - 2009)
 + Adolph EVNIN
 5 Mickey EVNIN (1953 -)
 + Harriet BANK
 6 Joshua Nathaniel EVNIN (1982 -)
 6 Tamara Aviva (Tami) EVNIN (1987 -)
 5 Kerry EVNIN (1956 -)
 + Susan GREEN
 + Laura BINOWITZ
 6 Aaron EVNIN (1985 -)
 6 Aimee EVNIN (1991 -)
 5 Shari EVNIN (1959 -)
 + Bradley GIBSON
 6 Lindsay GIBSON (1994 -)
 6 Ryan GIBSON (1999 -)
 3 Esther (Estelle) FELDMAN (1900 - 1982)
 + Aaron UNGER (1899 - 1976)
 4 Elaine UNGER (1924 -)
 + Jerry BROOKS (1921 - 1958)
 5 Mindy BROOKS (1954 -)
 + Gary GALINSKY (1952 -)
 6 Andrew GALINSKY (1978 -)
 6 Eric GALINSKY (1983 -)
 5 Barry H. BROOKS (1957 -)
 + Sandra FINKLESTEIN (1949 -)
 6 Amy BROOKS (1989 -)
 6 Jenna BROOKS (1992 -)
 4 Irwin UNGER (1927 -)
 + Jody DOMENICK
 5 Julie UNGER (1967 -)

..... 6 Savanah BENNET (1996 -)
 5 Laura UNGER (1970 -)
 3 William (Bill) FELDMAN (FELTMAN) (1910 - 1999)
 + Annette HARRIS (1912 - 1995)
 4 Michael FELTMAN
 + Sheila UNKNOWN
 + Karol UNKNOWN
 + Linda UNKNOWN
 4 Judith FELTMAN
 + Jerald (Jerry) TOBE
 3 Irene FELDMAN (1911 - 2004)
 + Lou LEVITSKY
 + Harry GOLDSTEIN (1904 - 1978)

Werthan Family Tree

9 Generations

... 1 David

..... 2 Salomon David (WERTHAN) (1695 -)

..... 3 David Salomon (WERTHAN) (1730 - 1787)

..... + Elckel (1738 -)

..... 4 Sussman David (WERTHAN) (1762 - 1828)

..... + Elcke (Elckel) Sussman (APFEL) (1766 - 1841)

..... 5 Lucas WERTHAN (1794 - 1859)

..... 5 Gumpel (Mordekhai) WERTHAN (1796 - 1866)

..... + Mirjam (Marjan) LINDAU (1800 - 1873)

..... 6 Jettchen WERTHAN (1838 -)

..... 6 Elina WERTHAN (1841 -)

..... 6 Johanette WERTHAN (1844 - 1845)

..... 5 Reisgen (Roschen) WERTHAN (1802 - 1878)

..... + Itzig GOTTHELF (1804 -)

..... 6 unnamed GOTTHELF (1834 - 1834)

..... 6 Sussman (Sigmund) GOTTHELF (1835 - 1895)

..... + Bertha LIEBMAN (1851 - 1921)

..... 7 Jacob C GODHELP (1872 - 1946)

..... + Caroline STEARN (1876 - 1941)

..... 8 Ida B GODHELP (1898 - 1977)

..... + Walter ERMAN

..... 8 Jeannette Clara GODHELP (1905 - 1985)

..... + unknown WHITE

..... 6 Jacob GOTTHELF (1838 -)

..... + Bertha FRANK (1845 -)

..... 7 Sigmund GODHELP (1867 -)

..... 7 Henry GODHELP (1869 -)

..... + Ester BERNSTEIN (1877 -)

..... 7 Ester GODHELP (1871 -)

..... + Moses HORNSTEIN

..... 6 Jette (Henriette) GOTTHELF (1839 - 1925)

..... + Wulf (William) WERTHAN (1835 - 1901)

..... 7 Theresa WERTHAN (1867 - 1944)

..... + Baruch (Bennett) FELDMAN (1864 - 1942)

..... 8 Edward FELDMAN (1892 -)

..... 8 Joseph FELDMAN (1894 -)

..... + Estelle S. UNKNOWN (1893 -)

..... 9 Marie FELDMAN (1913 -)

..... 9 Mozel FELDMAN (1914 -)

..... 9 Allen J FELDMAN (1926 -)

..... 8 Alfred Arnold FELDMAN (1898 -)

..... + Clara UNKNOWN

..... 9 Winnifred FELDMAN (1919 -)

..... 8 Irving Harald FELDMAN (1898 -)

..... 7 Sigmund (Sidney) WERTHAN (1869 -)

..... 7 Emma WERTHAN (1871 - 1939)

..... + Nathan FELDMAN (1870 - 1954)

..... 8 Tillie Rose FELDMAN (1894 - 1978)

..... + Mandel TREIBISH (HAMMERMAN) (1890 - 1963)

..... 9 Blossom Henrietta HAMMERMAN (1928 -)

..... + William KANOUSE

..... 8 Fannie FELDMAN (1895 - 1968)

..... + Jacob (Yankel) Leib BRENN (1895 - 1967)

..... 9 Berenice BRENN (1916 - 1999)

..... + Abe B SCHANKERMAN (1906 - 1982)
..... 9 Earl BRENN (1917 - 2001)
..... + Ruth A. ALPERT (1921 - 1997)
..... 9 Lorraine (Lorry) BRENN (1922 -)
..... + Hyman (Hy) GOLDENBERG (1918 - 2000)
..... 8 Theresa FELDMAN (1897 - 1993)
..... + Arthur SHAPIRO (1893 - 1954)
..... 9 Burton (Bud) SHAPIRO (1926 - 1981)
..... + Jone SCHAFER (1928 -)
..... 9 Roslyn SHAPIRO (1921 -)
..... + Joseph BLOCK (1921 -)
..... 8 Harold (Hurley) FELDMAN (FELTMAN) (1899 - 1989)
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..... + Bernard (Bunny) BLUMENTHAL
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..... 8 Esther (Estelle) FELDMAN (1900 - 1982)
..... + Aaron UNGER (1899 - 1976)
..... 9 Elaine UNGER (1924 -)
..... + Jerry BROOKS (1921 - 1958)
..... 9 Irwin UNGER (1927 -)
..... + Jody DOMENICK
..... 8 William (Bill) FELDMAN (FELTMAN) (1910 - 1999)
..... + Annette HARRIS (1912 - 1995)
..... 9 Michael FELTMAN
..... + Sheila UNKNOWN
..... + Karol UNKNOWN
..... + Linda UNKNOWN
..... 9 Judith FELTMAN
..... + Jerald (Jerry) TOBE
..... 8 Irene FELDMAN (1911 - 2004)
..... + Lou LEVITSKY
..... + Harry GOLDSTEIN (1904 - 1978)
..... 7 Bertha WERTHAN (1872 - 1946)
..... + Louis FISCHER
..... 8 Major FISCHER
..... 7 Minerva (Minnie) WERTHAN (1876 - 1955)
..... + Samuel Michael RAYMOND (1872 - 1949)
..... 8 Harry Harrison RAYMOND (1894 - 1968)
..... + Blanche Viola ROSS (1905 - 1988)
..... 9 Richard Ross RAYMOND (1924 - 1996)
..... + Elaine Margaret LEE (1923 -)
..... + Pamela Kay STEERS (1947 -)
..... 9 Margaret Jane RAYMOND (1927 - 1987)
..... + Walter Harold CORNUE (1925 - 1998)
..... + Warren Dale COLE (1924 - 1982)
..... 9 Robert Ross RAYMOND (1930 - 1995)
..... + Marsha Helen KOERNER (1933 -)
..... + Jeanette AGNEW (1935 -)
..... 9 Samuel Michael RAYMOND (1936 - 1996)
..... + Mildred Sonia BARTOS (1939 -)

..... 8 Irene RAYMOND (1899 - 1957)
..... + Roy STRAEHL (- 1973)
..... + Walter Calhoun TAGGART (1893 - 1948)
..... 9 Evelyn Irene TAGGART (1919 - 1995)
..... + Morris Lee GREEN (1916 - 1996)
..... 9 Audrey Lou TAGGART (1922 - 2005)
..... + Bartlett Manning HACKLEY (1920 - 2006)
..... 6 Ester GOTTHELF (1841 - 1842)
..... 6 Elkel (Emilie) GOTTHELF (1842 -)
..... + Meyer GOLDSCHMIDT (1843 -)
..... 5 Geisel (Yosef) WERTHAN (1806 - 1888)
..... + Dinchen? APFEL (1806 - 1836)
..... 6 Wulf (William) WERTHAN (1835 - 1901)
..... + Jette (Henriette) GOTTHELF (1839 - 1925)
..... 7 Theresa WERTHAN (1867 - 1944)
..... + Baruch (Bennett) FELDMAN (1864 - 1942)
..... 8 Edward FELDMAN (1892 -)
..... 8 Joseph FELDMAN (1894 -)
..... + Estelle S. UNKNOWN (1893 -)
..... 9 Marie FELDMAN (1913 -)
..... 9 Mozel FELDMAN (1914 -)
..... 9 Allen J FELDMAN (1926 -)
..... 8 Alfred Arnold FELDMAN (1898 -)
..... + Clara UNKNOWN
..... 9 Winnifred FELDMAN (1919 -)
..... 8 Irving Harald FELDMAN (1898 -)
..... 7 Sigmund (Sidney) WERTHAN (1869 -)
..... 7 Emma WERTHAN (1871 - 1939)
..... + Nathan FELDMAN (1870 - 1954)
..... 8 Tillie Rose FELDMAN (1894 - 1978)
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..... + Abe B SCHANKERMAN (1906 - 1982)
..... 9 Earl BRENN (1917 - 2001)
..... + Ruth A. ALPERT (1921 - 1997)
..... 9 Lorraine (Lorry) BRENN (1922 -)
..... + Hyman (Hy) GOLDENBERG (1918 - 2000)
..... 8 Theresa FELDMAN (1897 - 1993)
..... + Arthur SHAPIRO (1893 - 1954)
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..... + Jone SCHAFER (1928 -)
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..... + Joseph BLOCK (1921 -)
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..... + Bernard (Bunny) BLUMENTHAL
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..... + Adolph EVNIN
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..... + Jerry BROOKS (1921 - 1958)
..... 9 Irwin UNGER (1927 -)
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..... 9 Michael FELTMAN
..... + Sheila UNKNOWN
..... + Karol UNKNOWN
..... + Linda UNKNOWN
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..... + Jerald (Jerry) TOBE
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..... + Harry GOLDSTEIN (1904 - 1978)
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..... + Louis FISCHER
..... 8 Major FISCHER
..... 7 Minerva (Minnie) WERTHAN (1876 - 1955)
..... + Samuel Michael RAYMOND (1872 - 1949)
..... 8 Harry Harrison RAYMOND (1894 - 1968)
..... + Blanche Viola ROSS (1905 - 1988)
..... 9 Richard Ross RAYMOND (1924 - 1996)
..... + Elaine Margaret LEE (1923 -)
..... + Pamela Kay STEERS (1947 -)
..... 9 Margaret Jane RAYMOND (1927 - 1987)
..... + Walter Harold CORNUE (1925 - 1998)
..... + Warren Dale COLE (1924 - 1982)
..... 9 Robert Ross RAYMOND (1930 - 1995)
..... + Marsha Helen KOERNER (1933 -)
..... + Jeanette AGNEW (1935 -)
..... 9 Samuel Michael RAYMOND (1936 - 1996)
..... + Mildred Sonia BARTOS (1939 -)
..... 8 Irene RAYMOND (1899 - 1957)
..... + Roy STRAEHL (- 1973)
..... + Walter Calhoun TAGGART (1893 - 1948)
..... 9 Evelyn Irene TAGGART (1919 - 1995)
..... + Morris Lee GREEN (1916 - 1996)
..... 9 Audrey Lou TAGGART (1922 - 2005)
..... + Bartlett Manning HACKLEY (1920 - 2006)
..... + Therese APFEL (1806 - 1840)
..... 6 Lucas WERTHAN (1837 - 1921)
..... + Zerlina HOCHBURGER (1842 -)
..... 7 Theresa E WERTHAN (1870 - 1928)
..... 7 Jacob L WERTHAN (1871 - 1927)
..... 7 Harry H WERTHAN (1874 - 1932)
..... 7 Nora WERTHAN (1876 - 1937)
..... 7 Lena WERTHAN (1881 -)
..... + Jacob Benjamin KALVER (1880 - 1927)
..... 8 Walton (Walter) A. KALVER (1906 -)
..... 8 Jerome H KALVER (1907 - 1975)

..... 6 Trostel WERTHAN (1840 - 1840)
..... 6 David WERTHAN (1840 - 1840)
..... + Deina KAISER (1808 - 1854)
..... 6 David WERTHAN (1841 - 1917)
..... + Theresa UNKNOWN (1844 -)
..... 7 Delia WERTHAN (1868 -)
..... + Joseph OPPENHEIMER (1866 -)
..... 8 Bernese OPPENHEIMER (1887 -)
..... 8 Florence OPPENHEIMER (1896 -)
..... 7 Sidney WERTHAN (1870 -)
..... + Blanche WETZLER (1885 -)
..... 8 Carolyn WERTHAN (1908 - 1969)
..... + Ervin (Isadore) FEUERSTEIN (1902 - 1982)
..... 9 James David FEUERSTEIN (1936 - 1983)
..... + Sandra Lee WHITE (1939 -)
..... 9 Robert FEUERSTEIN (1938 - 1987)
..... + Rachel CREGG (1938 -)
..... 8 Jane Theresa WERTHAN (1913 -)
..... + Simon Frederick ROSENBAUM (1906 - 1994)
..... 9 Theresa Carol ROSENBAUM (1943 - 1968)
..... 9 Buddy ROSENBAUM
..... + Carol UNKNOWN
..... 7 George WERTHAN (1872 - 1920)
..... + Ella Martha MICHAELS (1870 - 1961)
..... 7 Rosa WERTHAN (1876 - 1940)
..... + Milton CAHN
..... 8 Rena CAHN (1897 -)
..... 8 Alma CAHN (1898 -)
..... 8 Dorothy CAHN (1903 -)
..... 7 Jennie WERTHAN (1878 -)
..... + Michael LEVY (1878 -)
..... 8 Richard M LEVY (1904 -)
..... 8 Clarice LEVY (1902 -)
..... 8 Helen LEVY (1909 -)
..... 7 Ida WERTHAN (1880 - 1925)
..... 7 Martha WERTHAN (1885 -)
..... + A. HERBST
..... 6 Meier WERTHAN (1843 - 1914)
..... + Minnie LIEBMAN (1855 - 1922)
..... 7 Morris WERTHAN (1876 - 1931)
..... + May MOSES (1880 -)
..... 8 Bernard Leonard WERTHAN (1903 - 1983)
..... + Leah Rose BERNSTEIN (1908 - 2000)
..... 9 Bernard WERTHAN, Jr. (1931 -)
..... + Betty Jane KORNMAN
..... 9 Joan WERTHAN (1934 -)
..... + Lawrence S. BLUM (1928 - 1995)
..... 9 Morris II WERTHAN (1937 -)
..... + Libby Joan ROSENBLUM (1937 -)
..... 8 Albert WERTHAN (1907 - 2004)
..... + Mary Jane LOWENHEIM (1907 - 2000)
..... 9 May WERTHAN (1934 - 1999)
..... + Herbert SHAYNE (1926 - 2003)
..... 9 Elizabeth WERTHAN

..... + Peter BUTTENWEISER
..... 8 Helen WERTHAN
..... + Adolph COHN
..... 9 Roger COHN
..... + Louis ROSENFELD
..... 9 Robert ROSENFELD
..... 7 Jannette (Jane) WERTHAN (1877 -)
..... + Leopold FRANKLIN (1874 -)
..... 8 Edwin M FRANKLIN (1908 -)
..... 8 Henry FRANKLIN (1911 -)
..... 7 Elka (Elsie) WERTHAN (1880 - 1938)
..... + John ADLER (1881 -)
..... 8 John ADLER, Jr. (1908 -)
..... 8 Alma ADLER
..... 7 Rose (Rosa) WERTHAN (1885 -)
..... + Robert WEIL (1872 -)
..... 8 Werthan M. WEIL (1907 - 1984)
..... + Birdie SILVER (1909 - 1988)
..... + Ethel J UNKNOWN
..... + Phyllis UNKNOWN
..... 8 Robert WEIL (1909 -)
..... 8 Morris WEIL (1913 - 2003)
..... 8 Leonard WEIL (1918 -)
..... 7 Edwin S. WERTHAN (1888 - 1888)
..... 7 Joseph WERTHAN (1889 - 1967)
..... + Sadie Mai BOGATSKY (1889 -)
..... 8 Howard Meyer WERTHAN (1914 - 1967)
..... + Heloise ISACSON (1900 - 2007)
..... 9 Joni WERTHAN
..... + Charles FELDMAN
..... 9 Patricia WERTHAN
..... + John Weil UHLMANN
..... 7 Alma WERTHAN (1890 -)
..... + Milton S. FRANK (1882 -)
..... 8 Meyer Werthan FRANK (1913 -)
..... 7 Leonard Leibman WERTHAN (1891 - 1944)
..... + Florence UNKNOWN
..... + Audrey UNKNOWN
..... 6 Hirsh WERTHAN (1845 - 1845)
..... 6 Loeb (Levi) WERTHAN (1847 -)
..... + Rebecca LOWENSTEIN (1852 - 1901)
..... 7 Edward Sidney WERTHAN (1881 -)
..... + Jean UNKNOWN
..... 7 Frank B. WERTHAN (1887 -)
..... 6 Gumpel (Gustav) WERTHAN (1848 -)
..... 6 Schoenchen WERTHAN (1850 -)
..... + Heinemann (Chajim) PLAUT (1843 - 1913)
..... 6 Elka WERTHAN (1852 - 1932)
..... + David ROSENTHAL (1854 - 1931)
..... 7 Hulda ROSENTHAL (1880 - 1887)
..... 7 Siegfried (Sussman) ROSENTHAL (1881 - 1918)
..... 7 Dina ROSENTHAL (1883 - 1943)
..... + David ZILBERSMIT
..... 7 Koppel (Karl) ROSENTHAL (1885 - 1953)

..... + Trude SCHUSTER
..... 8 Klaus ROSENTHAL (1916 - 1950)
..... 8 Georg Siegfried ROSENTHAL (1919 - 1941)
..... 7 Rosalie (Roesgen) ROSENTHAL (1886 - 1943)
..... 7 Hugo (Yosef Yashuvi) ROSENTHAL (1887 - 1980)
..... + Betty (Yehudit) GOLDSCHMIDT (1893 - 1976)
..... 8 Gavriel YASHUVI (1920 - 1943)
..... 8 Uriel YASHUVI (1923 -)
..... + Tamar DUVDEVANI (1930 -)
..... 9 Naama YASHUVI (1961 -)
..... + Eran HAYET
..... 9 Yiftah YASHUVI (1962 -)
..... + Shlomit (1964 -)
..... + Simha (Simi)
..... 9 Inbal YASHUVI (1964 -)
..... + Uri KAUFMAN
..... 8 Rahel ROSENTHAL (1922 -)
..... + Benjamin GALAI (1921 - 1995)
..... 9 Shaul GALAI (1952 - 1994)
..... + Liora BERKOWICH (1953 -)
..... + Rivka KATZ
..... 7 Leo ROSENTHAL (1889 - 1960)
..... + Martha Meta STERN (1891 - 1980)
..... 8 Werner Wayne ROSENTHAL (1920 - 1976)
..... + Freida UNKNOWN
..... 8 Hugo ROSENTHAL (1923 - 1924)
..... 8 Edgar ROSENTHAL (1927 - 1994)
..... + Shirley KNUTSON (1931 -)
..... + Evangeline Cecilia MARTINEZ (1944 -)
..... 9 Michael Leo ROSENTHAL (1972 -)
..... 9 Rori Lynn Macha ROSENTHAL (1973 -)
..... 9 David A. ROSENTHAL (1974 -)
..... 8 unnamed ROSENTHAL (1932 - 1932)
..... 7 Georg ROSENTHAL (1889 - 1916)
..... 7 Grete (Gitel) ROSENTHAL (1893 - 1955)
..... 7 Alma (Breinchen) ROSENTHAL (1896 - 1943)
..... 5 Salomon WERTHAN (1808 -)
..... 4 Eisemann Isaak David (WERTHAN) (1763 - 1843)
..... + Beila/Beilchen KATZ (1772 - 1848)
..... 5 David Eisemann WERTHAN (1799 - 1871)
..... + Zerlina (Sarchen) STIEGLITZ (1797 - 1837)
..... 6 Eisemann WERTHAN (1831 - 1832)
..... 6 Nathan WERTHAN (1832 -)
..... + Bienche STIEBEL (1835 -)
..... 7 Zerlina WERTHAN (1863 -)
..... + Loeb (Leopold) KATZENSTEIN
..... 6 Gutter WERTHAN (- 1835)
..... 6 Taubchen WERTHAN (1837 - 1866)
..... + Elieser (Leiser) WERTHAN
..... + Ester ECKMAN (1807 - 1891)
..... 6 Goldchen WERTHAN (1839 -)
..... 6 Jacob WERTHAN (1842 -)
..... 6 Elinchen WERTHAN (1845 -)
..... 6 Eisemann WERTHAN

..... 5 Mundel Eisemann WERTHAN (1802 -)
..... 5 Meschulam (Sussman) Eisemann WERTHAN (1806 - 1862)
..... + Ester TANNENWALD (1811 - 1864)
..... 6 Eisemann WERTHAN (1834 - 1843)
..... 6 Isaak WERTHAN (1836 - 1855)
..... 6 Taubchen WERTHAN (1837 - 1866)
..... + Leiser WERTHAN (1812 - 1882)
..... 7 David WERTHAN (1862 -)
..... 7 Sussman WERTHAN (1864 -)
..... 6 Hannchen WERTHAN (1839 -)
..... 6 David WERTHAN (1840 -)
..... + Hannchen LINZ (1842 -)
..... 6 Jette (Jettchen) WERTHAN (1842 -)
..... + Jacob WERTHAN (1842 -)
..... 6 Mina WERTHAN (1845 - 1847)
..... 6 Baruch WERTHAN (1848 - 1850)
..... 6 Salomon WERTHAN (1849 - 1916)
..... + Bertha ELIEL (1856 - 1894)
..... 7 Ester WERTHAN (1885 - 1962)
..... + unknown LANG
..... 8 Evelyn LANG (1920 -)
..... 8 Gilbert LANG (1921 -)
..... 8 Leonard LANG (1921 -)
..... 7 Alfred Eliel WERTHAN (1887 - 1927)
..... + Frances R ROSENBERG
..... 8 Bertha V. WERTHAN (1916 - 1917)
..... 8 Eugene WERTHAN (1920 - 2003)
..... + Helen UNKNOWN (1922 -)
..... 9 Susan WERTHAN
..... + Carlos MURAWCZYK
..... 9 Allan WERTHAN
..... + Vanessa VALENTINE
..... 9 Wendy WERTHAN
..... + Allen BERGER
..... 7 Clarence WERTHAN (1889 - 1981)
..... + Frances UNKNOWN (1905 - 1991)
..... 7 Sidney WERTHAN (1891 - 1968)
..... + Emily E UNKNOWN (1902 -)
..... 6 Leiser WERTHAN (1852 -)
..... 5 Mirjam WERTHAN
..... + Sussman SCHURNEMANN
..... 5 Leiser WERTHAN (1812 - 1882)
..... + Diena TANNENWALD (1814 - 1860)
..... 6 Eisemann WERTHAN (1843 - 1870)
..... 6 Jettchen (Jittel Dina) WERTHAN (1845 - 1932)
..... + Jesiai FALKENSTEIN (1847 - 1910)
..... 6 Isaak WERTHAN (1847 - 1867)
..... 6 David WERTHAN (1847 -)
..... + Taubchen WERTHAN (1837 - 1866)
..... 6 David WERTHAN (1862 -)
..... 6 Sussman WERTHAN (1864 -)
..... 5 Susmann (WERTHAN)
..... 4 Judemann David (WERTHAN) (1768 - 1847)
..... + Gutel (Judl) HESS (HESSBERG) (1776 - 1864)

..... 5 Reichel WERTHAN (1804 - 1888)
..... + Geisel LINZ (1795 - 1866)
..... 6 Beischen LINZ (1831 - 1892)
..... 6 Elinchen LINZ
..... 6 David LINZ (1832 -)
..... 6 Hannchen LINZ (1834 -)
..... + Simson MULLER
..... 6 Jettchen LINZ (1838 -)
..... 6 Sussman Geisel LINZ (1840 -)
..... 6 Elina Geisel LINZ (1842 -)
..... 6 Settchen LINZ (1849 -)
..... + Benjamin BLUMENTHAL
..... 5 David Judemann WERTHAN (1806 - 1881)
..... + Reichel or Reicha KATZENSTEIN (1810 - 1868)
..... 6 Beisgen or Binchen WERTHAN (1835 -)
..... + Jacob KAHN
..... 6 Fraedchen WERTHAN (1837 -)
..... 6 Jettchen WERTHAN (1838 -)
..... 6 Joseph WERTHAN (1840 - 1840)
..... 6 Rosgen WERTHAN (1841 - 1843)
..... 6 Hannchen WERTHAN (1841 - 1841)
..... 6 Rosgen WERTHAN (1843 - 1843)
..... 6 Rosa WERTHAN (1844 - 1853)
..... 6 Joseph WERTHAN (1845 -)
..... + Peischen (Paulina) GOLDSCHMIDT (1847 - 1902)
..... 7 Otto WERTHAN (1872 -)
..... 7 Julius WERTHAN (1872 -)
..... + Johanna HIRSHOWITZ
..... 8 Fred WERTHAN (1919 - 1997)
..... + Evelyn RABINOWITZ (1922 - 1987)
..... 9 Jeffrey Michael WERTHAN
..... + Susan Elizabeth MILLER
..... 9 Thomas WERTHAN
..... 9 Wendy WERTHAN
..... 7 Rosa WERTHAN (1876 -)
..... + Emil LESSER
..... 7 Leopold WERTHAN (1878 -)
..... 7 Clara WERTHAN (1880 -)
..... + Moses Max JACOBSON
..... 7 Elsa WERTHAN (1885 -)
..... + Herman HERSCHEROVITZ
..... 7 Alfred WERTHAN (1887 - 1943)
..... + Else HAHN (1901 - 1944)
..... 6 Regina WERTHAN (1848 - 1850)
..... 5 Kalman WERTHAN (1808 - 1838)
..... 5 Salomon WERTHAN (1810 - 1889)
..... + Beila (Beilchen) KATZENSTEIN (1816 - 1892)
..... 6 Hess WERTHAN (1842 -)
..... 6 Eline WERTHAN (1845 - 1845)
..... 5 Gumpel (Mordekhai Moses) WERTHAN (1816 - 1871)
..... + Rosgen HESS (1821 -)
..... 6 David WERTHAN (1843 - 1844)
..... 6 Eline WERTHAN (1845 - 1845)
..... 6 David WERTHAN (1846 -)

..... + Behsge (Betti) LINZ (1832 - 1853)
..... 6 Roschen WERTHAN (1856 -)
..... 6 Elinchen Jettchen WERTHAN (1857 -)
..... 6 Reche WERTHAN (1857 - 1858)
..... 6 Friederika WERTHAN (1860 - 1860)
..... 6 Judemann WERTHAN (1861 -)
..... 6 Leiser WERTHAN (1862 -)
..... 6 Hess (Herman) WERTHAN (1864 - 1864)
..... 6 Moses WERTHAN (1865 - 1865)
..... 6 Goldina WERTHAN (1866 -)
..... 6 Moses Moritz WERTHAN (1868 -)
..... 6 Rochel? WERTHAN (1858 -)
..... 5 Judgen WERTHAN
..... 4 Gumpel Marcus David (WERTHAN) (1775 -)



Ellen Stepak nee Goldenberg grew up in Huntington, Indiana, USA. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin/Madison, she made aliyah to Israel in September 1969. Since 1995 Ellen has been engaged in research of her ancestors from Pinsk, Belarus; Rotenburg an der Fulda, Germany (and in the US from 1854); Belozerkha, Ukraine; Kupiskis and Vabalninkas, Lithuania and Lodz, Poland. Among her family surnames are Brenn, Posenitzky, Werthan, Gotthelf, Krukstein, Klots and Kling. She has translated material for the Internet, is writing family books, has helped document old Jewish cemeteries in Europe, and has written articles on genealogical topics. She is an active member of the Israel Genealogical Society. She is the wife of Zvi, mother of three and grandmother of two.

In this book, Ellen relates the story of her genealogical journey to discovering and researching her roots in the region of Hesse, Germany. It is a very different story from that of her other ancestors. Here the family resided in one place, even in one house, for generations, and she was able to visit inside the half-timbered family home, dating from before the 19th Century.