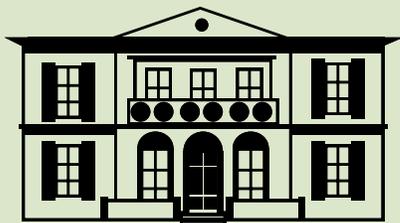


In Touch

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE
JEWISH MUSEUM HOHENEMS, INC.

ISSN: 1559-4866 • May 2021



www.afjmh.org

Stephan Rollin
Founder

Timothy L. Hanford
President

Claude Rollin, Esq.
Vice-President

Uri Taenzer, Esq.
Secretary-Treasurer

Trustees

Dr. Robert Amler
Nicole M. Angiel
Andy Barth
Ronald Bernell
Francesca Brunner-Kennedy
Nadia Follman
Hon. Susan Shimer
David Taenzer
Monica Wollner

In Touch Editors:
Jennifer Shimer Piper
Jessica Piper

Please send your
In Touch articles to:
newsletter@afjmh.org

Visit us on the web:

Jewish Museum Hohenems:
www.jm-hohenems.at

American Friends of the
Jewish Museum Hohenems:
www.afjmh.org

Letter from the President

TIMOTHY L. HANFORD

Dear Friends and Supporters of AFJMH:

I am pleased to share this Spring newsletter with you. With the expanding availability of vaccines for COVID-19, there is reason for optimism, but that must be tempered because the pandemic is still with us. It will be a while before the Jewish Museum Hohenems can again welcome a full complement of visitors but, as you will see, the museum is using ingenuity to continue to fulfill its mission.

Museum Director **Hanno Loewy** tells us in this issue about the continuing impact of the pandemic on the Jewish Museum Hohenems and the surprisingly robust activities the Museum has nonetheless undertaken. Like museums worldwide, the Jewish Museum Hohenems has experienced a significant drop in revenues and will need our continued support.

This year we are celebrating the Museum's 30th anniversary and doing our best to give it a strong push towards a 40th and beyond. *We are also celebrating the 150th birthday of Rabbi Aron Tänzer*, one of whose many accomplishments was the *genealogical research* that allows many Hohenems descendants to know exactly how they may be cousins.

As you are no doubt aware, the mission of the AFJMH is to provide additional financial support for the Jewish Museum Hohenems. The AFJMH also provides financial assistance for maintaining the Hohenems Jewish Cemetery. Your support for the Museum's exhibitions, its publications, its research, and its events remains indispensable. **The pandemic has created economic uncertainty for many Americans, but if you are able, I want to encourage you to continue your financial support.**

The AFJMH is proud to have so many American Hohenems descendants as members. I will single out one such descendant, my father, *Lloyd Hanford*, who left us in November—he attended the 2008 descendants' reunion with me and hoped that his grandchildren and great-grandchildren would enjoy future such reunions. We are always pleased to welcome more members to the AFJMH! Please send a note your siblings and offspring and cousins urging them to take a look at the *AFJMH website* (www.AFJMH.org) and consider joining AFJMH.

I want to take this opportunity to extend continued best wishes to all for a happy, healthy, and productive 2021. Your past generosity to AFJMH is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,
Tim Hanford
President



SPEND A SUMMER WITH THE JEWISH MUSEUM HOHENEMS

The AFJMH is sponsoring an internship with the Jewish Museum Hohenems for the **summer of 2022**. This internship, open to a descendant who is enrolled in college as of the fall of 2021, is an opportunity to gain in depth appreciation and enjoy life in the former Jewish community while assisting the museum's director and staff in a variety of projects. Speaking German is helpful, but not required. The only requirements are an interest in working in a new environment and enthusiasm for learning about history and culture. Further information regarding the terms and application process may be found on *AFJMH's website*.

A Letter from the Director to Friends

DR. HANNO LOEWY

Dear friends of the Jewish Museum!

We are all still suffering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Only gradually can we see light at the end of the tunnel, and the effects will occupy us for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the Museum is at work: We are taking care of our collections and publications, preparing exhibitions for the future, and cooperating with other museums on existential questions of our further development as cultural institutions.

This spring, the Jewish Museum will be 30 years old. We are celebrating the occasion with the third issue of our museum newspaper, and with an **online event** by our Friends on **May 26, 2021**. Whether we will be able to hold a public celebration in the summer remains to be seen.

On March 13, 2020, the Museum had to close and could not reopen until June 1, with severe restrictions. We locked down again from November 3 to December 7, and a third time beginning December 24. The museum has since reopened but with greatly reduced access for visitors.

Since March 2020, only very occasional school groups have been able to participate in our outreach programs. Guided tours and outdoor programs with adult groups have likewise only been possible in limited numbers. Numerous events, including the symposium *“The Future of Testimony,”* the cultural festival *“Emsiana,”* and the “European Summer University for Jewish Studies” had to be canceled.

Naturally, our visitor numbers have also been cut by more than half during this time. We were encouraged last summer to see many people from the region visit us at a time when hardly anyone came to us across the borders.

The museum has responded to these challenges by rescheduling its exhibition programs. Our exhibition *“End of the Contemporary?”* was extended into August, and the subsequent exhibition *“The Last Europeans”* did not open until October 2020.

We were also able to reach interested people in our outreach programs and—at least in the summer—through outdoor programs in the Jewish Quarter and on the escape routes at the border.

We also took the pandemic as a chance to learn how to reach out and to connect across borders. Many of our events since the summer of 2020 have taken place online, bringing together people to discuss what matters today, between New York and Jerusalem, Ramallah and Zurich, Vienna, Berlin and naturally: Hohenems and our immediate environment.

Many donations and also political programs to financially support the economy and cultural institutions helped compensate for the dramatic loss of revenue. However, our financial situation will remain precarious as long as it is not foreseeable when normal operations will be possible again.

We are very grateful for the generous help we have received this year. We know that help is needed in many places. We are all the more moved by the manifold solidarity in these difficult times. Let us continue to look after one another.

With Love from Hohenems,
Hanno Loewy

עמס

Film about the Reunion now in English and Spanish

Film about the Reunion now in English and Spanish **Bernd Seidel's** film about the Reunion 2017—“Who am I”—is now available online with English and Spanish subtitles, thanks to **Julius Peltz** and **Karla Galindo-Barth (Hirschfeld)**.

You find the film on our website on: <https://www.jm-hohenems.at/en/descendants/descendants-reunion-2017>



News from the Museum:

Publications:

Hannes Sulzenbacher: The Brunner Family. A European-Jewish History. Hohenems-Trieste-Vienna

Despite a modest lineage as butchers and cattle dealers in Hohenems, the Jewish Brunner family experienced a steep social and cultural rise: at the beginning of the 19th century, almost an entire generation left Vorarlberg to seek their fortune elsewhere. Their destination was the then-Austrian port city of Trieste, whose rapid development as a Habsburg Mediterranean metropolis also brought the Brunners a period of splendor. Economic migrants became economic magnates, and wholesalers eventually became upper-class citizens.

The history of large parts of Europe is reflected in a family that soon lived scattered across the continent and yet remained in close contact with each other and with Hohenems. With the development of Europe into a continent of nationalism and mutual hatred, with the devastation of two world wars and the expulsion and annihilation of the European Jews, the heyday of the Brunner family also ended. Parts of the family were scattered all over the world. But members of the family still meet regularly, somewhere on the globe, or in Hohenems.

The starting point for this book is the exhibition “The Last Europeans. Jewish Perspectives on the Crises of an Idea” at the Jewish Museum Hohenems-and an extensive permanent loan

to the museum: the estate of Carlo Alberto Brunner, consisting of letters and documents, memorabilia, and everyday objects from many generations of the Brunner family. They provide a glimpse into 300 years of Jewish family history and a European era that ended in war and destruction.

German edition:

Hannes Sulzenbacher: *Die Familie Brunner. Eine europäisch-jüdische Familie. Hohenems-Triest-Wien.* Bucher Verlag, Hohenems 2021, 240 pages, 95 illustrations, 19,80 €.

English edition:

Hannes Sulzenbacher: *The Brunner Family. A European-Jewish History. Hohenems-Trieste-Vienna.* Bucher Verlag, Hohenems 2021, 240 pages, 95 illustrations, 29,80 €. (This is the German edition together with a separate text volume in English)



JÜDISCHES MUSEUM HOHENEMS **DMJ**

alte freiheiten von ems

Old Liberties Of Hohenems

WWW.JM-HOHNEMES.AT
HOHNEMES, SAMSTAG 1. JULI 2018
2. JAHRGANG | NR. 2 | 4,50 GULDEN

Hanno Loewy: *Four days to remember—the Reunion 2017*

Vier unvergessliche Tage: Das Nachkommentreffen 2017

Old Liberties of Hohenems, No. 3 coming soon...

The new newspaper of the Jewish Museum Hohenems will be published in June 2021, with articles on the “last Europeans” and on the anniversary of the 30th anniversary of the Jewish Museum.

The newspaper will be sent to all descendants for free, with additional copies available for shipping costs and a voluntary donation.

News from the Museum: Exhibitions

End of Testimony?

Our joint exhibition with the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial, and the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future“ (EVZ) in Germany will now travel on. It will be on display at the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial until May, still under the threat of lockdown, followed by presentations planned in Munich, Augsburg, Berlin, Vienna and Frankfurt am Main. Joint events are also on the agenda. In June, the symposium “Future of Contemporary Witnessing?” will take place in Munich, but probably as an online-only event. The probing questions about the future of Holocaust memory posed by our exhibition will continue to occupy us all.

Holocaust witnessing is coming to an end. Only a few survivors of Nazi rule can still speak from their own experience or tell of those people who were murdered in the Holocaust. What remains are literary testimonies and countless video interviews of survivors, as well as the questions of how we want to deal with this legacy in the future.

For this reason, we look at the history of contemporary witnessing, explore the complex relationship between the contemporary witness and the interviewer and the medium and society. The focus is on the memory of the Shoah as it has been handed down in interviews and recordings of public appearances by contemporary witnesses. It becomes a narrative—wrested from a trauma while simultaneously the product of relationships and interests, depending on its respective context in politics and society, in court or school classes, for research, television or cinema.



Photos provided by Hanno Lowey

The Last Europeans? Jewish Perspectives on the crises of an idea / The Brunner family. A Legacy

Until October 3, we are putting the future of Europe up for discussion at the Museum: the diverse and often contradictory contributions of Jewish visionaries, jurists, scientists, artists, writers, and entrepreneurs to the development of European unity—and the current crisis of the European idea under the siege of nationalism and populism.

Seventy-five years after the end of the Second World War, Europe is threatened by a relapse into nationalist and xenophobic ideologies. The European imperative “Never again!” is being questioned by many, including here in Austria. At the same time, Europe’s nationalists are discovering their own fantasy of the “Christian-Jewish Occident”—as a fighting term against immigration and integration. The values of the Enlightenment, which formed the basis of European understanding after the catastrophes of the 20th century, are warped into their opposite, becoming a means of isolation and exclusion.

An extensive permanent loan to the Jewish Museum Hohenems enables a comparative view of a European century based on individual and family history. The starting point for the exhibition “The Last Europeans” is the estate of Carlo Alberto Brunner, consisting of letters and documents, memorabilia, and everyday objects of the Brunner family from Hohenems, who set out for Trieste in the first half of the 19th century to contribute to the rapid development of the Habsburg Mediterranean metropolis. Their steep social and cultural rise coincided with the development of Europe into a continent of mutual hatred and in the devastation of two world wars that scattered parts of the family all over the world.

The program accompanying the exhibition “The Very Central European University” is now held largely online. All the information is always up to date on the website.

Parallel to the exhibition, the museum presents on the new website www.lasteuropeans.eu with ongoing insights into the crises of the European unification process and biographies of Jewish Europeans and their commitment to European unity, democracy and human rights.



News from the Museum: Exhibitions (Cont'd)

Permanent exhibition

Due to numerous new additions to the museum's collection, some changes have been made to the permanent exhibition. For example, Rudolf Gomperz's silver locomotive—which his grandfather, Heinrich Sichrovsky, received in 1845 as a gift from his employees when he was Secretary General of the Kaiser Ferdinand Nordbahn (Northern Railway)—can be seen in a new exhibition installation. One hundred years after Heinrich Sichrovsky opened Austria's first railroad, his grandson, the pioneer of modern ski tourism on the Arlberg, was deported from Vienna in 1942 to his death on the tracks of the "Nordbahn" his grandfather had planned. The silver model remained in St. Anton in the mountains in the attic of a neighbor only to be found recently.

The Female Side of God

The successful exhibition of the Jewish Museum opened in Frankfurt in October 2020 in the just reopened Jewish Museum. Only a few days later, it had to be closed again due to the new lockdown. The Frankfurt museum was able to temporarily reopen its doors in March.

Collection / Archive / Scientific Projects:

The museum's scientific work in 2020 was marked by cooperation with the project Yerusha, the European Jewish Archives Portal of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe. After an initial smaller project to index Jewish-themed archival holdings in western Austria and South Tyrol, last year the Jewish Museum Hohenems indexed holdings in state, local, and community archives in German-speaking Switzerland for the Yerusha project's database.

Together with the Swiss Association for Jewish Genealogy and the Jewish Museum Gailingen, a preliminary project was carried out for the cross-border indexing of genealogical and biographical data on family networks between Vorarlberg,

Switzerland and southern Germany, with the aim of being able to apply for a possible EU project on this topic.

New collection items reached the museum and were added to the collection, including the partial estate of the British artist Hans Schwarz, who came from the Hohenems Jewish Schwarz family. In time for the opening of the exhibition "The Last Europeans," the processing of the extensive estate of Carlo Alberto Brunner (and the history of the Brunner family in Hohenems and Trieste recovered in it) was also largely completed.

Parallel to this, the Museum continued the digitization of the collection holdings on an ongoing basis.

Other projects:

Democracy culture.

Political education on Judaism, anti-Semitism, culture of remembrance and the Middle East in the field of tension informed by migration

Together with partners—the province of Vorarlberg (Coordination Office for Integration Affairs), okay. zusammen leben, the Project Office for Immigration and Migration, _erinnern_at. Verein Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust: Gedächtnis und Gegenwart, the Institute for Islamic Theology and Religious Education at the University of Innsbruck, and the Association of Islamic congregations in Vorarlberg—the Jewish Museum is planning training programs for Muslim facilitators in Islamic congregations, public schools, associations, and youth centers.

In 2020, a preliminary project was carried out with funding from the state of Vorarlberg. Currently, the museum is negotiating with possible donors about the future funding of this ambitious project.

Across the Border.

Escape Sites in Vorarlberg 1938-1945

With numerous partners, the Jewish Museum is planning a bicycle trail with audio stations along the Vorarlberg-Switzerland border and a website with reconstructions of historical escape events. Thousands of refugees tried to reach the saving Switzerland via Vorarlberg between March 1938 and May 1945, including not only Jews but also political opponents of the Nazis, persecuted artists and intellectuals, forced laborers, prisoners of war and deserters. Many of their stories are now well researched, others are still only passed on orally. They have all helped shape the landscape of remembrance in the Rhine Valley.

Along the border, their stories will be made accessible to locals and guests alike at the original sites. The first intensive preliminary work for the project already took place last year. Our partners hope to realize the project by spring 2022.

museumdenken.eu

Together with the Austrian Museum Association, the blog museologien.blogspot.com, and a network of Austrian, German, and Swiss museologists and museum staff, the Jewish Museum Hohenems is preparing a website and a series of events to discuss the future of museums as public institutions.

Tribute to Aron Tänzer



We dedicate this issue to **Aron Tänzer**. January 30, 2021 was his 150th birthday. He was a Hohenems rabbi, a historian and popular educator without whose activities around 1900 the Jewish Museum would hardly be imaginable today. He founded the Hohenems municipal archives. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Rabbi Tänzer's birth, the Jewish Museum Hohenems, in cooperation with the Hohenems Municipal Archives, organized a festive evening that included representatives from the principal stations of his life and his descendants in the United States. The celebration was via Zoom and YouTube. To watch the recording of the event, visit: <https://youtu.be/JlwZGwK2lKA>

Aron Tänzer was born in former Hungarian Pressburg, today's Bratislava. His studies led him via Berlin and Bern and finally, with his wife Rosa, to Hohenems in 1896. Tänzer, who saw himself as a pioneer of Jewish reform, devoted himself to research on Jewish and regional history. He gave enlightened lectures for the urban public. As rabbi, he set up what is now the City Archive in Hohenems. His monumental work on the history of the Jews in Hohenems was published as early as 1905 in Merano, the next station in his rabbinical career. Finally, in 1907, he and his family moved to Göppingen in Württemberg, Germany, where he worked for thirty years, interrupted only by his service as a field rabbi (chaplain) on the Eastern Front during World War I.



Celebration of 150th birthday of Rabbi Aron Tänzer

REMARKS BY URI TAENZER

Hello everyone. I am **Uri Taenzer** and with me is my dear wife, **Marlena**. We, and our family are thrilled to be with you today. Our hearts overflow with gratitude for the many occasions when we and our family were welcomed with open arms by the founders and directors, Burgermeisters, by scholars, by descendants, and by the local residents and supporters of the wonderful Jewish Museums Hohenems, in Goeppingen - Jebenhausen and in Meran. We can't thank you enough for continuing to uplift Rabbi Aron Tänzer's legacy, including of course, by today's program, with more to come later this year.

How different the world into which Aron Tänzer was born in 1871 is from the world in which he died in 1937, and the world in which we are able to meet today, technologically distant via Zoom and during a world-wide pandemic, no less.

It's beyond incredible that 150 years after his birth in Pressburg, our grandfather, Rabbi Aron Tänzer who passed away at the age of 66 in 1937, would be celebrated today, on January 30, 2021, on the 150th anniversary of his birth, by scholars and archivists and by Jewish museums in Bratislava, in Hohenems, in Goeppingen and in Merano.

If only he could have foreseen, during those last dark years of his life, when Germany turned its back on civilization that, in time, the power of mankind's better angels would overcome the banality of evil.

I for one feel confident that Aron Tänzer's spirit is with us today on this long-distance call. How amazing is it that today the Internet enables his proud progeny, including his five grandchildren and his nine great grandchildren to participate in this wonderful tribute from the United States and Canada. Sadly, uncle Erwin,

Aron and Bertha Tänzer's youngest child, has already passed away. He was most intimately involved and in frequent contact with Dr. Karl Heinz Ruess and so many others during the formative years of the Hohenems and Jebenhausen Jewish museums. If only Erwin could observe today's event. He is the one person who should be speaking to you on behalf of our family today.

From the time my sister Ruthy and I grew up in Palestine, during the British Mandate and after we moved to the states in 1951, we were well aware of the reverence with which our parents and our uncles and aunts held Rabbi Tänzer and his wives, Rosa and Bertha, of blessed memory.

In a few minutes, our cousin Helen Lott will tell you about her grandmother, Bertha.

My grandmother, Rosa Handler was the sister of Simon Handler who changed the family name to Hevesi and who became the Chief Rabbi of Hungary from 1927 until his death in 1943. Rosa was 21 when she and her 25-year-old husband, Aron Tänzer were married on June 2, 1896. At that time, our grandfather was on staff for just six months at a synagogue in Totis, Hungary, having commenced his rabbinical career on December 1, 1895.

How unimaginably tragic Rosa's death must have been, when in 1912, at the age of 37, she succumbed after an ill-advised second operation for what today would have been an easily curable thyroid condition. We are truly thankful for the years that Rosa lived, for she was not only the devoted and much beloved wife of Rabbi Tänzer, but also the birth-mother, in Hohenems, of my uncle Paul in 1897, my father, Fritz in 1898, my aunt Reni in 1902 and my uncle Hugo, in Meran, in 1906.

Continued on Page 7

Tribute to Aron Tänzer *(Cont'd from Page 6)*

Celebration of 150th birthday of Rabbi Aron Tänzer

Remarks by Uri Taenzer

It's simply wonderful that we can join today, in a technology driven shrunken world, to thank Aron Tanzer for his authorship of monumental works depicting the rich history of former Jewish communities in Hohenems in Vorarlberg, in Goepfingen and Jebenhausen in Württemberg, and in Meran. We are also grateful for his many other important scholarly endeavors, the academic research, the plays he authored, the lessons he taught, the sermons he preached, the broader intellectual legacy he dispensed including his intimate explorations of the works of Heine and Goethe, and his mentor, the philosopher Moritz Lazarus.

A recent book by Peter C. Appelbaum titled *"Loyalty Betrayed, Jewish Chaplains in the German Army during WWI"* includes a complete English translation of Rabbi Tanzer's WWI diaries. It brought home to me just how selflessly our grandfather sacrificed for Germany, including his own health. He endured horrific conditions on the Eastern Front. His selfless devotion to give comfort to soldiers of all denominations and to help feed hungry souls was truly exceptional.

We are deeply grateful to everyone in Hohenems, Bratislava, Goepfingen and Meran (and also to our friends at the Leo Baeck

Institute) who have been so dedicated over the past sixty-six years since Germany and Austria regained their senses, to honor Aron Tanzer in so many ways. By exhibitions, in books, articles, television programs, web pages and social media. And of course today, by this wonderful program and the amazing video production which we just experienced.

Please forgive me for not naming names or we will be here all night. You all know who you are and I hope you also know how much each and every one of you and your families mean to me, to Marlena, and to each and every member of our extended family.

Finally, just a quick reminder. In my capacity as secretary-treasurer and on behalf of our great organization, the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, I invite everyone to visit our web site, AFJMH.org. There, thanks to **David Taenzer**, our family's webmaster, you will also find links to the newsletters which were published by the American Friends since 1991, including biographies of descendants from the families described in Aron Tanzer's book.

Thank you so much.

Words of Dieter Egger on the occasion of Aron Tänzer's 150th birthday

Dear descendants of Aron Tänzer, dear all who are present in the world wide web,

This is a special moment for Hohenems, not only the 150th birthday of Aron Tänzer. Its time to say thank you. This sign will help us to do this.

The city of Hohenems owes Aron Tänzer more than most of our citizens know. He was much more than just the rabbi of the Jewish Community.

As we learned tonight he took part in the move of this little town into the 20th century. He wrote the history of the Jewish community and made it possible that generations of descendants could relate themselves to this town centuries after their physical presence in this region. And he helped to form such a remarkable force of a living memory and a contemporary worldwide community.

By preserving the history of the Jewish community he made it possible to install a worldwide recognized Jewish Museum.

Together with the Mayor then he established the municipal archives and helped to save the memory of our town as a whole. And as a historian he also wrote about many facets of our regional history.

The Jewish Museum is helping to bring all that to the attention of many people. But still there is no sign in the street that presents Aron Tänzer to everybody passing by and to everybody looking at the map. In a few weeks we want to change that, by naming the place in front of the Jewish Museum **Aron Tänzer Platz**, offering the Jewish museum the opportunity to have a proper address that connects itself with its origins.

Thanks to you all who made that possible. Congratulation to the family for the insistence of your ancestor that Hohenems is a special place. He helped to make it.

Aron Tänzer Tribute Continues on Page 9

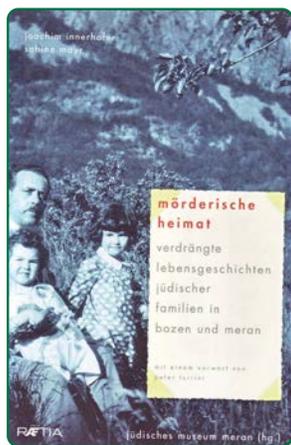


Seeking Meran's Jewish heritage

SABINE MAYR & JOACHIM INNERHOFER



In the summer of 2017, **Uri and Marlena** and **Helen and Cliff** spent some days in Meran with their family. For Joachim and me it was a great honour to meet with them and to take this unique opportunity of gathering information on the Tänzer family. From our research, carried out for the book *“Murderous home. Untold stories of Jewish families in Bozen and Meran.”*¹ we knew that **Aron Tänzer** settled in Meran in 1905. In Meran he tried to establish an independent Jewish community, which would have been supported by wealthy Jewish inhabitants and visitors of the meanwhile well-known health resort. In fact, since the 1870's Jews living in Meran had been trying to disengage from the Jewish community in Hohenems, to which it belonged. Nevertheless, their endeavours had been rejected by the authorities despite the fact that Meran continued to attract Jewish visitors and entrepreneurs from all over the world. At the same time Hohenems became less attractive.



Aron Tänzer fiercely defended the idea of independently administering a Jewish community in Meran, even though he was perfectly aware of the strong and still increasing antisemitism in the southern part of Tyrol. Carrying out research for a book on Jewish intellectuals writing in that area I realised that Aron Tänzer's decision to settle down in Meran in 1905 might partly also have been caused by his endeavour to promote education. The non-Jewish population of the area was exposed to

the hatred disseminated on Jews in articles printed by clergymen in conservative newspapers or uttered in Sunday sermons. Aron



Tänzer spoke about local antisemitic attitudes very clearly in a public speech held in Vienna on 1 February 1900, in which he introduced parts of his *“History of the Jews in Tyrol and Vorarlberg.”* In my book *“Von Heinrich Heine bis David Vogel. Das andere Meran aus jüdischer Perspektive”* (2019) I showed that, against this background, Tänzer's opening of the synagogue in Meran on 27 March 1901 must have been accompanied by a sense of triumph over antisemitic attitudes. He had witnessed and publicly condemned

the antisemitic trials of social exclusion professed by conservative politicians, who feared to lose their hegemonial power. Fending off Jews meant fending off liberal claims of democratic reforms, since liberal ideas were often promoted by Jewish visitors. Both should be banned from the country.

It is important to remember Aron Tänzer's social commitment and his fierce rejection of antisemitic attitudes in the years, when he was responsible for Tyrol, and especially in the years from 1905 to 1907, when he lived in Meran. In my book I tried to explain the way how Jewish intellectuals who stayed in Meran and Southern Tyrol creatively answered to the Tyrolean mechanism of power, largely based on antisemitic images. In this respect, Aron Tänzer must be seen in line with intellectuals like the satirist Daniel Spitzer, with the poet Heinrich Heine or with Franz Kafka and his refined social observations. In his prose narrative *“Reise von München nach Genua,”* Heinrich Heine criticizes the mock historian and archivist Joseph von Hormayr. According to Heine, Hormayr had disseminated wrong information among the largely uneducated inhabitants of Tyrol, thus inciting the unsuccessful rebellion of 1809. In his *“History of the Jews in Tyrol and Vorarlberg”*² Aron Tänzer takes up Heine's remarks on Hormayr by documenting and explaining Hormayr's mean behaviour when he asked the Jewish community in Hohenems to finance the uprising.

Aron Tänzer's commitment to a respectful, open and honest society is still very much needed in South Tyrol. Still today predominant newspapers try to influence politics with far right-wing ideas including fake news. When Aron Tänzer criticized the antisemitic editors of the clerical and conservative newspaper *“Burggräfler,”* edited in Meran, in his above-mentioned speech in Vienna, he coined the word *“anti-veritan”* for a person willingly misusing and misrepresenting historical or political information and, more specifically, spreading lies

Continued on Page 9

¹ German version of 2015: Joachim Innerhofer, Sabine Mayr: *Mörderische Heimat. Verdrängte Lebensgeschichten jüdischer Familien in Bozen und Meran*, Italian version of 2017: Sabine Mayr, Joachim Innerhofer: *Quando la patria uccide. Storie ritrovate di famiglie ebraiche in Alto Adige*, <https://www.raetia.com/del/geschichte-und-politik/349-morderische-heimat.html>

² Aron Tänzer: „Geschichte der Juden in Tirol und Vorarlberg“, F. W. Ellmenreich's, Meran 1905.

Seeking Meran's Jewish heritage

(Cont'd from Page 8)

on Jews. The neologism perfectly highlights the process of intentionally distorting the truth and shows again how much Aron Tänzer was committed to an educated, fair, open and honest society, applying an early form of social criticism, which he had learned by his teacher Moritz Lazarus, who is now considered to be one of the founders of the scientific discipline of sociology. In 1920, almost 20 years after Meran's synagogue had been opened, it was Franz Kafka's turn to criticize the same newspaper denounced as antisemitic by Tänzer back in 1900. In brief, Aron Tänzer's social commitment and his standing up for respecting minorities still form an important role model for South Tyrol.

One outcome of our meeting Helen and Uri Tänzer and their family was an *article* printed in the local weekly magazine "ff."³ And that same year, 2017, saw the head of the South Tyrolean government Arno Kompatscher expressing a first official recognition that South Tyroleans during the Second World War had not only been victims of fascism and National Socialism, as had been proclaimed for a very long time. Arno Kompatscher admitted that people from South Tyrol, which had become a part of Italy in 1919, also took part in the persecution and deportation of Jews living in the area. Federico Steinhaus, Cinzia Villani and Liliana Picciotto had published many books on the matter, whose insights Joachim and I included in our book "Mörderische Heimat," which was also based on the very important and highly appreciated help of survivors and descendants of Jewish families formerly living in South Tyrol.

³ Jüdisches Erbe. Aron Tänzer war zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts Rabbiner der jüdischen Gemeinde in Meran. Seine Nachfahren haben sich auf Spurensuche begeben., ff – Das Südtiroler Wochenmagazin no. 36, 2017, pp. 46–48, <https://www.ff-bz.com/gesellschaft-wissen/2017-36/juedisches-erbe.html>.



Tribute to Aron Tänzer

(Cont'd from Page 7)

Words of Eva Grabherr on Aron Tänzer (founding Hohenems director 1990 - 1996)

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much, dear Hanno for organizing this celebration and inviting me to speak to this distinguished circle of people.

My kindest regards go to the descendants of Aron Tänzer, the person we are celebrating this evening—a person so important for the particular profile of our city of Hohenems and the province of Vorarlberg as a whole.

I'm honoured to stand here as the former director of the Jewish Museum Hohenems in its "version 1.0", which opened nearly 30 years ago, in spring 1991, and I want to speak on behalf of the many people who had worked for many years to get this museum established and opened at that time. I'm not sure whether people who work for the museum today or people who know its permanent exhibition today, can assess the importance of Aron Tänzer's book on the history of the Hohenems Jews for establishing the museum and its first permanent exhibition in 1991. (I know that Hanno Loewy does (-:))

This first permanent exhibition of the museum already gave a very comprehensive insight into the history of the Jews in Hohenems from the 17th to the 20th century. That was anything but natural and only possible because A. Tänzer had laid the foundation. Contemporary historical research at the time could never have accomplished that. In his work A. T. has given us access to innumerable historical sources that would have been lost without him.

In particular, we owed him important and detailed information on the internal constitution of the Jewish community of H. and its culture, ranging from religion and language to various other forms of cultural life.

And he gave us detailed information on families and a variety of individual people who had formed the community.

Thanks to A.T.'s work this museum was able to give a very detailed portrait of Jewish life in this former, rural Jewish Community of Hohenems as early as 1991 and that was anything but natural considering the state of the art of historical research on rural Jewry at that time.

A.T.'s opus was important for a museum which wanted to tell the history of people rather than provide mostly political history.

It was crucial for a museum that wanted to raise interest of the people today for the lives of the people who had lived there before and, if possible, to bridge the gap between them – however, without neglecting the history of Anti-Jewish prejudice, of persecution and extermination of Jewish people in Hohenems as well as in other places of Austria and Europe.

Continued on Page 10

**Your tax-deductible donations are welcome; please make donations payable to AFJMH,
and mail to: AFJMH • P.O.Box 237 • Moorestown, NJ 08057-0237**

Tribute to Aron Tänzer

(Cont'd) from Page 9

Words of Eva Grabherr on Aron Tänzer (Cont'd from Page 9)

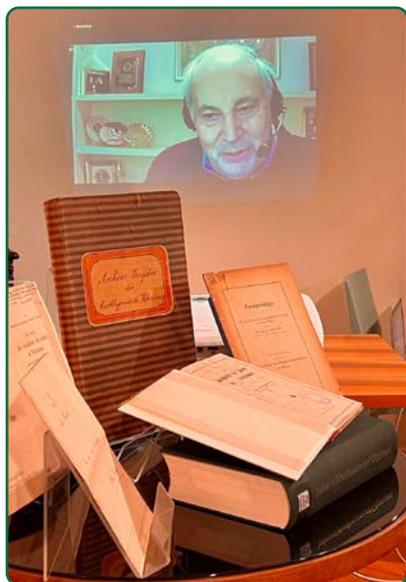
Tänzer's book was omnipresent, in our hands day in and day out. *Look it up in Tänzer* was the most frequently heard sentence among the scientific teams of the early days of our museum. And you could tell it by the look of the bookcovers. They were really well-thumbed, lost their binding and were full of hand-written comments and stuck-in post-its.

When preparing for this short speech to you, I was looking for my Tänzer, which was not easy to find, because I hadn't used it for years due to my change of profession. And this is how I found it in my shelf: deplorably worn-out and littered with post-its.

Happy birthday to you, Mister "Doctor-Rabbi" Tänzer, and thank

you for everything. You have created an indispensable tool for all of us. I really hope you **are** satisfied with what we made of it.

Speech of Eva Grabherr, founding director 1990 – 1996, on the occasion of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Aron Tänzer. (Support for translating into English by her brother **Fritz Grabherr**, who enjoyed to learn about Aron Tänzer and was very touched by the speeches of Uri und Helen.)



History of the Jewish Community of Merano (A Speech from Federico Steinhaus)

On this day, as we honour the memory of **Rav Aron Tänzer z.l.**, I would like to share with you the history of the Jewish Community of Merano, the place where he served after opening and certifying the first synagogue in the Austrian Land Tyrol.

At the end of the Nineteenth century, the Jews living in Innsbruck and in Merano belonged to the Jewish Community of Hohenems.

Hohenems was the only one allowed, and therefore the only one existing in this area, which at that time was part of Austria. Since it was quite difficult for the Jews living in Merano to attend the religious services held in Hohenems, especially during the wintertime, they asked to build a new synagogue closer to them. Not all wanted the synagogue in Merano as there were Jews living both in the northern and in the southern part of the Alps in Tyrol, but in the end, Merano prevailed because the majority of Jews lived in the south.

This synagogue was inaugurated by Rav Aron Tänzer on March 27, 1901. When the First World War began, the Rabbi in Merano was Rav Altmann who had come from Salzburg in 1917. As it happened to Rav Tänzer as well, Rav Altmann was awarded for his courage by Austria. Merano played a crucial role during the war for many reasons, one of which was that its sanatorium for poor Jews with lung disease was lent by the Jewish Community to the Austrian Red Cross to be used as a military hospital.

At the end of the war, since Austria lost and Italy won, the southern region of Tyrol was separated from the northern part of Tyrol and it became part of Italy. From the end of the war until 1938, the

Jewish Community of Merano faced intense growth since, at that time, Mussolini protected the Jews. Because of this protection, Jews came to Merano from central and oriental Europe, not only as wealthy tourists but as refugees as well. In 1938, Mussolini ordered a census of the Jews living in Italy, and soon after started with anti-Jewish laws that led to their persecution.

Just a few days after September 8, 1943, when Italy surrendered, the Nazis entered South Tyrol and immediately deported the Jews to the extermination camps. This was the first mass deportation from Italy, one month before the great deportation of the Jews in Rome. In the last year of the war, the Nazis built a concentration camp in Bolzano, where many Jews were brutally tortured and killed, and through which the trains of the deported Italian Jews did transit.

Just after the war, with the help of the Bricha on both sides of the Alps, 15,000 Jews crossed these high mountains and reached South Tyrol, from where they reached Italian ports and clandestinely left for Palestine. It must be said that Merano was a crossing point for the Nazi organization Odessa and the so-called ratline as well.

In recent years we had to wait for the third post-war generation of the local politicians and the local ruling party to be respected again and to see the institutions become friendly partners for the Jewish Community, so we could be able to share with them our memories of our sufferings. In 1995, we established a Jewish museum in the same building in which we have the synagogue and dozens of schools visit it every year. Of course, the museum shows documents highlighting the crucial role that Rav Aron Tänzer played in the history of our Jewish Community. Any time that we organize some event, many locals take part with great interest. We had to overcome prejudice and even hatred, but slowly we were able to reach this goal with the residents of the area where we live. We are honored for the role Rav Aron Tänzer played in the history of our Jewish Community and we proudly celebrate it within our museum.

Tribute to Hilde Meisel – Hilda Olday – Hilda Monte

DR. HANNO LOEWY

Hilda Monte, a Jewish resistance fighter who was killed when escaping from Vorarlberg to Switzerland in April 1945. A poignant story, The museum held a memorial event for her on April 17. She rests on the protestant cemetery in Feldkirch and we will mount a memorial plaque for her in April.



Hilda Monte was born Hilde Meisel in Vienna on July 31, 1914. In 1915, she and her family—her parents, Rosa and Ernst Meisel and her older sister Margot—moved to Berlin, where her father ran an import-export business. While still a teenager, she joined the International Socialist Fighting League (Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund, or ISK in German), a group founded by German philosopher Leonard Nelson in 1926.

In 1929, Hilde traveled to England for the first time to visit her uncle, the composer Edmund Meisel. In 1932 she moved to Paris. She regularly published analyses of the political and economic situation in England, France and Germany, Spain and the colonies. She spent 1933 and 1934 in the German Reich before emigrating again to Paris in 1934 and to London in 1936. She continued to travel illegally to the German Reich several times after that, helping organize workers' resistance actions. In 1938, in order to prevent her expulsion from England, she entered into a marriage of convenience with the German-British cartoonist John Olday, becoming a British citizen.

During the war, she remained involved in a wide variety of resistance activities, whether as a courier for the International Transport Workers' Federation or on behalf of Allied intelligence services. In 1940, her book "How to conquer Hitler," co-authored with Fritz Eberhard, was published. In the same year, she was involved in the creation of the radio station "of the European Revolution" and worked regularly for the German workers' broadcasts of the BBC. In 1942, she gave a shocking report on the

radio about the mass extermination of Jews that had begun in occupied Poland.

In 1943, her book "The Unity of Europe" was published, in which she developed the vision of a socialist Europe and its common institutions as an independent union between the USA and the Soviet Union. In 1944, together with her friend and ISK comrade Anna Beyer, she was parachuted over occupied France to make resistance contacts on behalf of the American intelligence service OSS and Austrian socialists. Soon after, she was taken to Switzerland by René and Hanna Bertholet, who were preparing political theories with socialist émigrés for the period after liberation.

In April 1945, Hilda Monte again crossed the border illegally to establish contact with socialists in Vorarlberg and to gather information about resistance groups there and their relationship to each other. A questionnaire she had prepared for this purpose is now in the archives of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Bonn.

On her way back, she was stopped by the border guard in Feldkirch on April 17, 1945, a few days before the end of the war. She tried to escape but was shot and died of her injury on the spot. Austrian socialists placed a tombstone on her grave with the inscription: "Here rests our unforgettable comrade Hilde Monte-Olday. Born 31.7. 1914 in Vienna. Died 17.4.1945 in Feldkirch. She lived and died in the service of the socialist idea."

After the war, many of her comrades became prominent members of the Social Democratic Party in Germany, pioneers of the emerging European Union and founders of intellectual periodicals, educational institutions and publishing houses, such as the *Europäische Verlagsanstalt*.

With the cooperation of the Jewish Museum Hohenems and the Protestant congregation of Feldkirch, her grave was restored in the spring of 2021 and a memorial plaque was placed next to the gravestone.





ARE THERE STORIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR NEWSLETTER?

Please email us (jennsp500@gmail.com) and offer suggestions or even better yet, let us know that you want to write a story. We would appreciate your work!



Your tax-deductible donations are welcome; please make donations payable to AFJMH, and mail to: AFJMH • P.O.Box 237 • Moorestown, NJ 08057-0237