

Hilchenbach Group

Photographs and Documents

The following photograph [SASS] of Hilchenbach is from a postcard mailed in 1898 and thus shows us Hilchenbach about ten years after my mother's paternal grandparents, Sophie Löwenstein and Levy Holländer, came to Hilchenbach from Elsoff. Somewhat to the right of the view, on the side of the tracks closest to us, is the house that my great-grandparents purchased in 1895 and where they lived until 1940. Below, in the section devoted to Sophie Löwenstein and Levy Holländer, is another early view of Hilchenbach in which the house is visible. In the foreground, to the left of the station, is the barn that appears in the cover photograph of [DIET-3]. Judging from our visit in 1996 the station has not changed much over the years.



There are many other photographs of Hilchenbach and the people who lived there, below and on the DVD. The main sources for people were the photo albums of Ruth Holländer and Selma Holländer and those sent to me over the years by Meta Miller [MM], the daughter of Rosa Sommer, who in turn was a sister of my grandmother Julie Sommer. A good guess is that Meta Miller brought many of these pictures to New York when she emigrated from Germany. Below there is a picture of her, taken some time in the 1930s, on a visit to Hilchenbach.

Other photos were sent by my mother's aunt Hedwig Holländer, and other cousins of Ruth Holländer, including Erna Schaefer and Wolfgang Holländer (Johnny Holland). Aside from Johnny Holland, with whom I was in contact by mail and telephone, I knew the four Schaefer sisters and the four Miller sisters.

Andreas Sassmannshausen [SASS] of Hilchenbach sent many old photographs, in particular of the houses where the various members of the family lived.

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Special Bibliography for the Hilchenbach Group

See also, “General Bibliography” in the introduction, and the additional bibliography in the “Hilchenbach Group” section of the DVD.

- [BATT] Documents and information sent to me by the city of Battenberg.
- [BERL-1] Documents and information sent to me by Rikarde Riedesel of the Hauptamt, Bad Berleburg.
- [BERL-2] Documents from the Bad Berleburg archives compiled by Rudi Braun in 1997 for Heinz Holländer.
- [BRA-1] Braun, Georg. 2002. *Dorfbuch über Elsoff und Christianseck*.
Images kindly sent to me by the same man who let us park our automobile on his property while we visited the cemetery in 2010.
- [BRA-2] Braun, Georg. 2014. *Die Elsoffer Juden*. Available at:
<http://elsoff-online.de> ↪ Dorf ↪ Geschichte ↪ Elsoffer Juden
A very impressive study of local Jewish history. The author used archival sources.
- [BRIL] Brillig, Bernhard. 1961-1963. *Deportations from Westphalia 1933-1942*
[LBI] [LBI has two updated versions, one in the form of a spreadsheet]
A list of 8,112 Jews who lived in Westphalia between 1933 and 1942, from the civic records of sixty communities; it includes information on where they were sent as well as on their fate.

The next four articles listed here are among the many written by Klaus Dietermann who, unfortunately, passed away from a rare cancer of the eye in 2017. Klaus was the person most responsible for the creation of the Aktives Museum in the remains of the foundation of the Siegen synagogue, which the Nazis had burned during Kristallnacht (November 9 - 10, 1938). He was a prolific writer on the Jews of the Siegerland and organized, along with Reinhard Gämlich, the Hilchenbach archivist, the Holländer exposition [DIET-3].

- [DIET-1] Dietermann, Klaus. 1975. “Ein Siegener Judenschicksal im Jahre 1817”. *Siegerländer Heimatkalender* 50, pp.117-122.
- [DIET-2] Dietermann, Klaus, Röcher, Ruth, Morgenstern-Wulff, Johanna. 1991. *Die jüdischen Friedhöfe im Kreis Siegen-Wittgenstein*. Siegen: Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit Siegerland.
The cemetery in Elsoff is discussed on p.16 and the identification of graves is on p.35.

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- [DIET-3] Dietermann, Klaus. 1998. *Familie Levy Holländer/Ein Jüdisches Schicksal aus Hilchenbach*. Siegen: Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit Siegerland.
This booklet served as the catalogue for the exposition of the same name held in Hilchenbach from December, 1998 until the spring of 1999.^{DVD}
- [DIET-4] Dietermann, Klaus. 1998. *Jüdisches Leben in Stadt und Land Siegen*. Siegen: Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit Siegerland.
- [ELKA] Elkar, Rainer. 1992. *Menschen-Häuser-Schicksale: Hilchenbach zwischen Monarchie, Diktatur und Republik* Kreuztal: Verlag Die Wielandschmiede.
- [GAML] Documents and various information sent by Herr Reinhard Gämlich, the archivist for the town of Hilchenbach. He helped organize the Holländer exposition that took place in the Hilchenbach museum in 1998-1999.
- [HIL-W] Wikipedia article, "Hilchenbach"; accessed 2019.11.25.
- [ORT] Arbeitsgemeinschaft Historische Ortskerne in Nordrhein-Westfalen. 1994. *Historische Ortskerne in Nordrhein-Westfalen*.
A beautiful book about the historic centres of sixteen towns in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Elsoff is discussed on pp. 28-33. The style of ancestral home of the Holländers is similar the houses shown.^{DVD}
- [PIOR] Piorr, Ralf. 2010 *Ohne Rückkehr: die Deportation der Juden aus dem Regierungsbezirk Arnsberg nach Zamość im April 1942* Essen: Klartext-Verl.
Discussions and lists of jews who were deported to the concentration camps located in Zamość, Poland in 1942. The parents and brother of Ruth Holländer were apparently part of this deportation; see the discussion under "The Parents of Ruth Holländer".
- [SASS] Information and especially many photographs, old and new, of Hilchenbach sent by Andreas Sassmannshausen.
- [THIE] Thiemann, W. 1968. *Von den Juden im Siegerland*. Siegen: Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit Siegerland.
The Jews of Hilchenbach are discussed on pp. 47-50.^{DVD}

Siegen-Wittgenstein and Battenberg and Their Jews

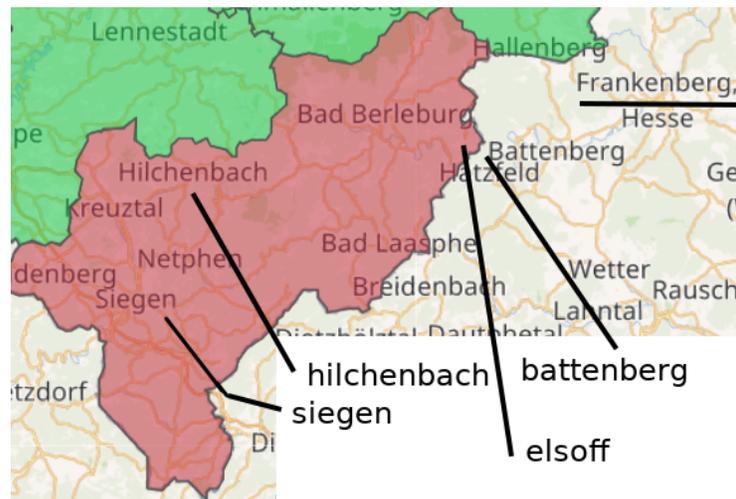
For the general history of the places discussed here see [HHSD, HLDL] in the "General Bibliography" and [HIL-W] above. On the DVD you will find a more detailed discussion of these regions and of the state of Westphalia as a whole, and in particular about the Jews who lived there.

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In France, after the end of the thirty-years war in 1648, power was concentrated in a central government (Alsace being a special case) and the rights / denial of rights as they related to Jews applied throughout the territory. The situation in the territory that makes up modern day Germany was completely different because at various points in time there were upwards of three-hundred distinct territories, some not much bigger than a town, ruled by kings, princes, dukes and counts. After the death of a ruler a territory might be divided among the heirs as was the case with Hesse-Darmstadt and Hesse-Kassel. Whether Jews were tolerated or not tolerated in a certain region depended on the local rulers and officials and on the period of their rule.



1803: "Nassau", Wittgenstein, Hesse-Darmstadt, Hesse-Kassel



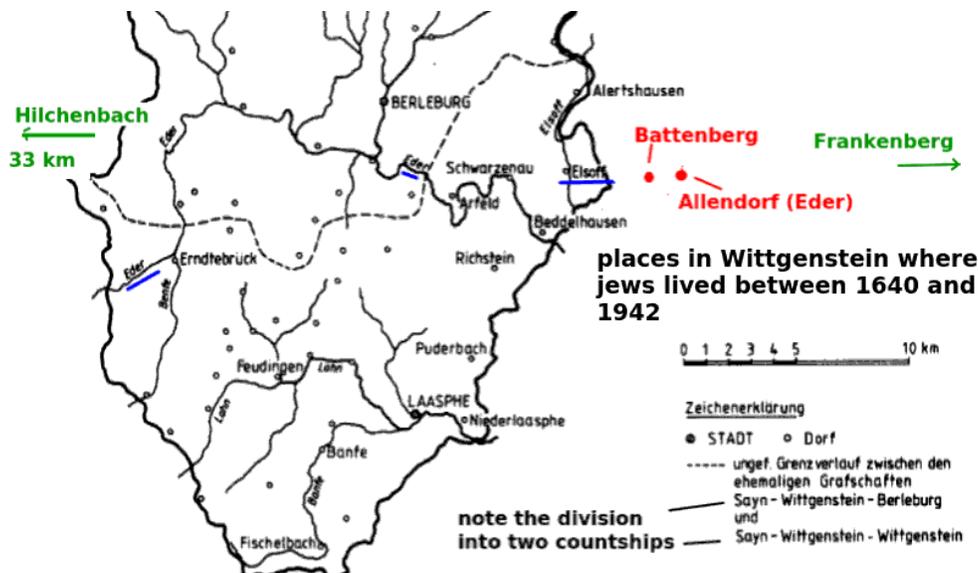
Present Day Siegen-Wittgenstein

Siegen-Wittgenstein is the name of a district (*Kreis*) in the present German state (*Land*) of North-Rhine-Westphalia. The history of the district, which is important

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for the understanding of the lives of these ancestors, is quite complicated. I chose a map which shows the situation in 1803 because -- although there were constant changes in borders throughout the years -- it essentially shows the old order when Wolf Holländer was living (and perhaps born) in Wittgenstein. This latter territory was bordered by both Hesse-Darmstadt and Hesse-Kassel and various houses of the Nassau dynasty. While constantly divided and rejoined "Nassau" more or less existed until absorbed by Prussia in 1816. Wittgenstein, at least in part, was first absorbed by Hessen-Darmstadt in 1806 and then by 1816 all of what constitutes present Siegen-Wittgenstein became part of the Prussian province of Westphalia [HIL-W].

Hilchenbach, whose name means "brook in the hills", is a municipality in the western part of the district and is located about 15 km northeast of Siegen, the major town in the region. Apparently the Jews of Hilchenbach went to Siegen for the high-holidays, even though they had their own prayer space and were not formally affiliated with the synagogue there.



Some 33 km to the east of Hilchenbach is the town of Elsoff which in turn is located in the far eastern part of Wittgenstein, and thus very close to the border with Hesse. Elsoff is where Joseph Holländer (the elder) was born in 1804 and where his father Wolf Holländer had been living.

The town of Battenberg, where Sophie Löwenstein was born is just 12 km to the east of Elsoff, but it is in Hesse. Previously, starting in 1648, Battenberg was part of Hesse-Darmstadt. I will discuss the possible implications of this below in the section "The Early Jews of Elsoff".

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Roger Fischler (2)

Eliane Herz *Eliane Herz-Fischler* (1) 1943.01.23, Limoges -- [B, M, P].

See “The Haiger Group” for a summary of her life

Roger Fischler *Roger Morris Herz-Fischler* (2) 1940.02.22 -- [B, M, P].

See “The Haiger Group” for a discussion of the name “Herz-Fischler”

marriage 1964.04.12, New York, with Eliane Herz.

children:

1. Mychèle Erica Herz-Fischler. 1969.01.24, Thornhill, Ontario -- .
2. Seline Denise Herz-Fischler, 1972.06.29, Ottawa, Ontario -- .

The following is a selection of photos taken at various times in my life before our marriage:

- i. June 1940; four months old.
- ii. Probably summer 1941.



- iii. Ca. 1946; perhaps when I was starting school. If so the tradition of taking first day of school photos has continued with our daughters and then with their children.
- iv Summer 1956, Ridgefield, Connecticut.

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- v. January 9, 1960. I am swimming the 200 yards butterfly; my time was 2min, 50.6 seconds. This was my first year of swimming butterfly and my head is coming up too high above the water. My best time for this distance was approximately 2min, 16 seconds in early 1964.
- vi. September 1960, just before leaving for graduate school at the University of Oregon.



Compared to Eliane's life, as described in her book *Ma Famille*, my early years were rather bland. While her father escaped from Nazi Germany in 1935 and spent the war years in France, my mother had obtained a visa to the United States where she arrived in November 1937. After the war Eliane's family faced food rationing and the effects of the war were felt for a long time. I, on the other hand, grew up in New York where little would have outwardly changed after the war and certainly there were neither food shortages nor physical signs that a world war had recently ended.

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My parents' friends all spoke German and I probably was under the impression when young that all Jews spoke German. A year or so prior to my bar-mitzvah we joined a synagogue where announcements, sermons and bulletins were entirely in German. My mother, and probably to some extent my father, spoke to me in German until around the age of three and since I continued to hear German I could understand daily conversations and speak what I refer to as "kitchen German". When, as an adult, I reproached my mother for having stopped speaking German to me, her reply was that my father wanted to stop because of the war. Since they continued to speak German to their friends throughout their lives, it may have been that they wanted me to speak like an American boy.

I speak of the German environment with which I was in contact even though it constituted a small part -- see the discussion on the DVD -- of the larger and very ethnically and religiously diverse world of the upper Manhattan where I grew up. I say this because at some point in my life -- probably in my mid-teens -- I realized who all these German Jews were and became conscious of the fact that I did not have any grandparents. My parents never spoke about the fact that their friends, the relatives on my mother's side, and the other German Jews that they knew were almost all refugees. Later in life I thought about these matters quite a bit, especially when I started doing genealogical research after my father passed away in 1972.

My childhood, through high school, consisted of school and playing with my friends. We lived in a densely populated area and since the larger parks were at least twenty minutes walk away we usually played in the streets (despite the automobiles), on sidewalks, and on the top of a huge parking garage to which we had access via fire escapes. I also was a member the Boy Scouts until I came down with rheumatic fever in my early teens. Every summer parents sent me away to camp in the country, usually for two months.

I am not sure exactly when it was, but at some point in my early teens I decided that I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer. And I can not remember why, but it certainly was not because I wanted to be a pilot, as was the case with my fellow troublemaker Sammy Greenbaum. In any case I wrote the test for Brooklyn Technical High School (about a fifty minute subway ride) and was admitted to the aeronautical programme. One of the ironies of my life is that because I heartily disliked the two years of French that I had to take in middle school, I did not go into the academic stream, where language study was required. Despite this, I ended up as a Francophile who speaks French to his wife, children and grandchildren! In any case I was not among the top students, although I had good marks in mathematics and physics, until near the end of my third year, when, within the space of a few weeks, my grades shot up and stayed up through the end of high school and college.

In January 1957 I graduated from high school and entered the aeronautical engineering programme of the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. I was the top student in this programme, but by the end of the third year I realized that I was more interested

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in the theoretical and mathematical aspects than the strictly engineering part and so I switched to the applied mathematics programme. In my mind I was going to do advanced applied mathematics, but I ended up going to the University of Oregon (in part because I felt that it was time to leave home) where the courses were all theoretical. The switch was quite difficult for me at first, but by the end of the first year my abilities improved. I eventually went into theoretical probability, which is a long way from aeronautical engineering. I was a university professor, first at the University of Toronto and then at Carleton University. For the first ten years I did research and wrote articles in the field of theoretical probability. But, as with so many aspects of my life, my research changed after I started teaching the mathematics course for students of architecture.

Above I spoke about playing with my friends, but this was at the level of informal games, without any instruction. I had taught myself to swim at a camp and at university I joined the swimming team as a backstroker, but I was not very good. However, the summer before my last year I was unable to find employment and so I went to the YMCA every day and switched to butterfly. I was much better at that and held the school record. Improving my swimming became important to me and in the summer before graduate school I became a life guard and worked out a great deal. When I arrived at Oregon, where the swimming level was much higher than at Brooklyn Poly, the coach let me work out with the first year team members and I continued to improve. For the rest of my life I continued regular exercise in the form of swimming, cross-country skiing (which Eliane and I loved doing together; see the photograph in the chapter, "By Way of a Conclusion") and then in my seventies (when I stopped swimming) and eighties, weight and cardio exercises in addition to cross-country skiing.

I can not close this short autobiography without saying more about my marriage to Eliane than what appears in "A Triple Love Story" in the Preface. Eliane and her family came to New York in September of 1958 and they visited us within a few days of their arrival, She was fifteen and I was eighteen and just starting my third year of university. I took both her and her sister to dances at the university and I would see her several times over the next two years, but the relationship was never that of girlfriend-boyfriend. I went away to Oregon in the fall of 1960 and do not recall if I ever saw her again until December of 1963. In particular, I do not recall asking her for help when I was studying to pass the Ph.D. reading examination in French during the summer of 1962. This is another irony of life in view of her being my constant French tutor and walking dictionary and grammar book for over fifty-six years!

Everything changed in the summer of 1963. I had just passed my doctoral examination and my parents came to Oregon, from where we embarked on a road trip through Oregon, Washington and Canada (my first visit here). I remember distinctly sitting in the cafeteria of the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River and asking my parents about various people, in particular Eliane. It was at that moment that I started think-

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ing of her as a woman and on the flight to New York, where I went over the winter break, the thought entered my mind that I should ask her to marry me. Despite this thought, I did nothing to contact her. However, one day I was in the Bronx visiting someone whom I knew from Oregon and who was sitting Shiva. I decided to walk to Eliane's house and I spent some time talking to her mother, who in turn told Eliane that I had visited. Eliane called and we spoke for a long time. We went to two plays and as we were walking after the second play, I told her that I thought that I loved her and asked her to marry me. She was not ready to say "yes", but neither did she say, "no". We saw each other every day before I returned to Oregon. Then, on January 6, 1964, she called me up and wanted to know if I was still asking her the same question. We married on April 12, 1964. Years later Eliane told me that somehow she was not surprised when I asked her to marry me.

After I had written the above, I came across the photos of the summer 1963 trip in my mother's album. So in memory of the beginnings of a beautiful, and long, romance here are two photos of that fateful day:



July 18, 1963: Roger and Sigmund Fischler at the Grand Coulee Dam

The Parents of Roger Fischler

Ruth Holländer (21) 1915.01.09, Hilchenbach -- 1982.12.02, New York [B, D, P].

Sigmund Fischler *Fischleiber* (22) Leipzig, 1899.08.14 -- 1972.03.06, New York [B, D, P].

See "The Leipzig Group" for a summary of his life

marriage: 1939.03.19, New York.

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child:

1. **Roger Fischler** (2) 1940.02.22, New York; see above.

The Two Worlds of Ruth Holländer

From a strictly chronological view point we could divide the life of Ruth Holländer into two periods: from her birth in Hilchenbach on January 9, 1915 until her departure from Germany on November 1, 1937 and from November 1, 1937 until her death on December 2, 1982. But this would be an oversimplification for, like many refugees, she always maintained links---some being open and some being private---with the land of her birth.

A German Childhood



My mother did not talk very much about her childhood, but from the little that she and my aunt Selma Holländer (see the chapter devoted to her and Freddy Furcht) told me and from the photographs and documents that she left behind, it would seem that she lived the life of a typical child and young woman who grew up in a small German town of the 1920s and 1930s. The first photo, ca. 1926, shows my mother, her sister Selma, and her brother Artur. As was the case in most small towns, my mother finished her formal education after eight years of school. We see her (fourth from the right in the back) in a picture that might be of her graduating class. This was sent to her sometime after 1972 by one of the women in Hilchenbach with whom, as I learned from her address book, she remained in contact. On the back of the photograph the children are identified and their fate described.^{DVD}

Next, we see her in Wanfried [a. d. Werra] in July 1929, at the start of an apprenticeship with Herman Ehrlich, a manufacturer of women and children's clothing. Wanfried is on the north-east border of Hesse, so this was a long way from home. However, the town is about 50 km north-east of her mother's home town of Heinebach, so perhaps there was a family connection. She worked for Ehrlich from mid-1929

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until the end of 1933 and in 1934 she worked in Brühl (near Bonn). From early 1935 until mid-1936 she worked as a sales clerk in the Marshall textile store in Stuttgart. After the sale of the store -- probably due to restrictions or incidents related to the Nazi regime -- my mother worked in Frau Marshall's home. There was still a certain normalcy in life, at least in the small town of Hilchenbach, after the Nazis took power in early 1933 as indicated by several photographs in her album. For example, the next picture, which dates from 1936, shows her with her parents (far left), her aunt Hedwig Holländer (to the left of my mother) on the family plot in Hilchenbach. It was explained to me in Hilchenbach that the German government had distributed small tracts of land during the first world war.



The picture just above, on the left, was taken during a visit of my mother's cousin, Meta Miller, to Hilchenbach. It is possible that it was taken shortly before Meta Miller emigrated to New York. In the back row, from left to right are Hedwig Holländer, Levy

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Holländer and my mother. Meta Miller is standing in front of my mother. In the front row are Selma Holländer and Artur Holländer. The house in the background is that of Sophie Löwenstein and Levy Holländer [GAML].

Because of the deteriorating situation of the Jews of Germany my mother left Germany on November 1, 1937. She had obtained a visa on July 22, 1937. The next photograph was taken in Stuttgart and it most probably was a passport picture. On the back there is the message, "Meinem Sig", dated March 22, 1938 which suggests that my parent's relationship had progressed considerably in the five months since they had met.

In the picture below we see my mother with her brother Artur, her sister Selma and their parents. I suspect that this photo belongs to the series of photographs -- see the preface -- that my mother took as she left Germany.



A Katzenstein who Sponsored and Saved Many Jews

N.B. The documents consulted for the following are contained in the DVD in the directory: HILCHENBACH_GROUP/SOL_KATZENSTEIN/

There was an ironic, but fortunate, twist to the immigration of German Jewish

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refugees to the United States. American immigration policy was designed to let in mainly northern European people, including Germans, but in Nazi Germany non-Jews were in general not allowed to emigrate. Thus American quotas were not a major obstacle. Furthermore, though there were interments and murders of Jews before the systematic extermination that came out of the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, Jews who were able to go to another country were generally allowed to leave. Furthermore the United States did not enter WWII until the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December of 1941. The major obstacle for refugees was obtaining a sponsorship by someone who would be a moral and financial guarantor.

So the question of interest is: who sponsored my mother? My mother's cousin Meta Miller provided me with an unsigned notary document from 1941 written by a Sol Katzenstein who lived in Queens, New York. The document states that he is concerned about his cousin Abraham Sommer and his family and he requests that the American Consul provide them with visas. Abraham Sommer was the brother of Meta's mother Rosa Sommer; see "The Heinebach Group.

Since a Sol Katzenstein was not listed among the grandchildren of Amalie Marx and Abraham Katzenstein, the description "cousin" perplexed me. However, a search in the LBI catalogue led me to an article written by a David Auerbach, whose wife was a granddaughter of a Sol Katzenstein from Frankenau, the hometown of Abraham Katzenstein. From this text and the accompanying German newspaper articles I learned that this Sol Katzenstein was born in 1870 in Frankenau. With this information in hand I searched in [Lagis] and learned that Sol Katzenstein was born on 1870.[03?-05?].²⁶, that his full name was Solomon, and that his parents were Meir Katzenstein and Lina [Riesel?]. Meir Katzenstein may be child 6 of Resede Mannheimer and Manus Katzenstein, the brother of Abraham Katzenstein, which would explain the use of the expression "cousins" in the affidavit. The reason for the uncertainty is that a Meir Katzenstein passed away on 1903.08.23 in Frankenau and, according to the Auerbach text, Sol Katzenstein brought two Torah scrolls to Frankenau in the 1920s in honour of his parents fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Returning to the story of Sol Katzenstein, we learn that he emigrated to Texas, where a relative lived, in 1886. He did very well in business as demonstrated by his gross income -- over \$30,000 -- as declared in the 1941 affidavit. For comparison, my father, as I recall, earned about \$3000 a year in the 1950s. Sol Katzenstein sponsored well over a hundred people and lodged some of them in his house until they were able to obtain work. My mother lived at one point in Forest Hills, Queens, whereas Sol Katzenstein lived in Kew Gardens, Queens. These districts of Queens are only a few kilometres apart, so perhaps the Katzensteins found a place for my mother that was not too far away. In 1937 one of the sponsored groups smuggled the above two Torah scrolls out of Germany in some furniture. In June of 2007 the Auerbachs went to Germany with the scrolls where a celebration was held and that trip is the subject of David Auerbach's text.

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In view of the great number of people for whom he provided visas it is safe to assume that Sol Katzenstein provided visas for Meta Miller, her parents and sisters, as well as for my mother, thus saving their lives. Abraham Sommer and his family were not as fortunate. Sol Katzenstein was a good man, doing good deeds.

A New Life

The photograph that my mother took of her father as she left Germany on November 1, 1937, as well as the photographs of her stay in Paris with Eliane's parents and the photographs on the boat with my father appear in the preface. My parents married on March 3, 1939 and they received the following wedding card from her parents:



In the chapter on the Leipzig group there is a photograph of a postcard whose text starts off with, "Dear relatives". My father's father had sent the postcard from German-occupied Poland to my mother's parents in Hilchenbach, and they in turn sent it to my mother in New York.

My parents were far from well-off and I learned that at some point they shared an apartment with another couple. My father worked in the New York fur market, having learned the trade with his father, and my mother was a seamstress and did catering. At some point she started doing accounting for people and firms.

We were what has been referred to as "upper lower class" i.e. we did not live in a house, nor own an automobile, nor was there an excess of income; we certainly ate

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well, but never in a restaurant. I was sent to camp every summer and my parents were able to go to the country for a couple of weeks in the summer and attend a few concerts. I believe that, aside from the group of very rich people, the income gap in New York City was much less in the 1940s and 1950s than at present. All the people that I knew and my parents' friends were probably in more or less the same economic situation.

I end this section with two photographs, one shows my parents in 1969, about three years before my father passed away. The second shows my mother in Bath, England in 1978, four years before she passed away in 1982. There are more photos of my father in the chapter on the Leipzig group and more of both my parents on the DVD.



The Maternal Grandparents of Roger Fischler

The Parents of Ruth Holländer

Julie Sommer (211) 1886.09.02, Heinebach--1942.04.28, deported to Zamość, Poland [B,M,P,PIOR,BRIL].

See "The Heinebach Group" for her parents

Joseph Holländer (212) 1884.09.13, Elsoff -- 1942.04.28, deported to Zamość, Poland [B,M,P,PIOR,BRIL].

marriage: 1914.03.27, Heinebach [M].

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The following three studio photographs most likely date from 1914 and represent engagement and marriage photographs.

I wonder how this marriage came about. Heinebach is about 130 km east of Hilchenbach with 35 km between Hilchenbach and Elsoff and then another 25 km to Frankenberg and a further 75 to Heinebach; see the maps after the table of contents. Was the match due to someone in Frankenberg, where Sarah Katzenstein, the mother of Julie Sommer, had lived and still had siblings?



Joseph Holländer served, as did at least three of his brothers, in the German army in WWI and from his medical record we know that he was hospitalized on several occasions. I have two pictures of my grandfather in uniform, the one on the left with my mother dates from early- or mid 1916, but I do not have any dates for the one on the right.

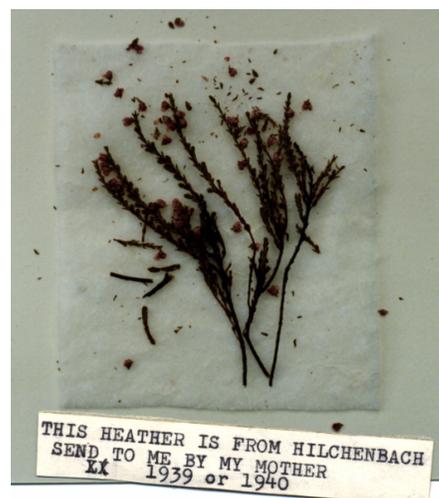


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As was the case with his father Levi, Joseph was a cattle dealer and, I believe, also a butcher. The photograph shows him bargaining in the cattle market (see the DVD for the meaning of the hand signals).

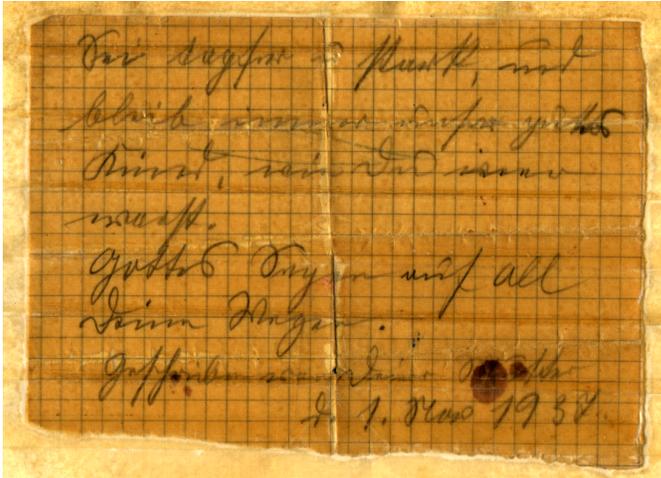


I have two objects that belonged to my grandparents. The first is my grandfather's fob watch, which he gave to his neighbour, Gertrude Peters, for safekeeping. The story of how it was given to my mother is explained in a letter that accompanied the watch which we found in her belongings after her death. The second is a bunch of heather sent by my grandmother to my mother. The botany technician at Carleton University tried to germinate the seeds these many years later, but apparently the seeds had not fully developed. Had he succeeded we would have planted the heather in our garden.



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I also have the following note that my grandmother Julie Sommer gave to my mother on the day that she left Germany.



Be courageous and strong,
and remain our good child,
as you always have been.
Godspeed in all your
endeavours.

Written by your mother.

November 1, 1937

Below is apparently the last photograph that my mother received from her parents, although they at least forwarded a postcard, sent to them from Warsaw on January 30, 1940, from my paternal grandfather Issac Fischleiber. It was sent for Rosh-HaShannah in the Jewish year 5700 (see the image of the back of the photograph), which occurred on September 14, 1939. World War II started on September 1, but since Germany and the United States were not yet at war, it may have been sent after the war had started.



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*Zu Rosh Hashana 5700
zum Andenken*

children:

1. **Ruth Holländer** (21) 1915.01.09, Hilchenbach -- 1982.12.02; see above.
2. **Selma Holländer** 1920.09.17, Hilchenbach -- 1982.07.02 New York.

See the chapter, "Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht"

3. **Artur Holländer** 1925.04.07 Hilchenbach -- 1942.04.28, deported to Zamość, Poland [P].

Here are photographs from two barmitsvah celebrations, that of my uncle who died in a Nazi extermination camp and mine:



Artur Holländer, 1938.04.16 and Roger Fischler, 1953.02.28

The Deportation of Julie Sommer and Joseph Holländer

Different people and sources give two dates and destinations concerning the sad demise of my grandparents and uncle:

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The book [PIOR], deals exclusively with the deportation of Jews from the Arnsberg administrative region on April 28, 1942 and lists the Joseph Holländer family. The same is true of [DIET-4]. The same date, but with the statement that they were turned over to the Gestapo in Siegen appears in [BRIL].

There were three other deportations from Siegen, including one on February 27, 1943. In a letter from Herbert Praeger, dated December 13, 1999, he states that he was part of the latter deportation. On the way to the assembly point in Dortmund, the families of Joseph and Willi Holländer boarded the train. When the train arrived at Auschwitz he was fortunate to be sent to the Monowitz auxillary camp. This was the location of a factory run by the IG Farben company to produce synthetic rubber and was staffed by slave labourers. He states that he saw the Holländers (plural) on their bunk beds with a fever. If we look at [BRIL] again we see that while the Joseph Holländer family is said to have been transported to the camps on April 28, 1942, the family of Willi Holländer, the brother of Joseph was on a February 27, 1943 transport. I suspect that fifty-six years after his deportation, in 1999, he remembered meeting Willi Holländer and because I had written to him concerning Joseph Holländer his recollection was that of meeting both families. Zamość is a long way from Auschwitz and there is little probability that the Joseph Holländer family was later transferred to the latter camp.

I had another report from my grandparents' neighbour Gertrude Peters. We met her when we went to Hilchenbach in 1998 and she gave a talk at the the opening of the exposition. As I stated, my grandfather had given her his gold watch for safekeeping. He also asked her for a knapsack for the deportation transport. She quoted him as saying that the people who are doing this to them will regret it for a long time.

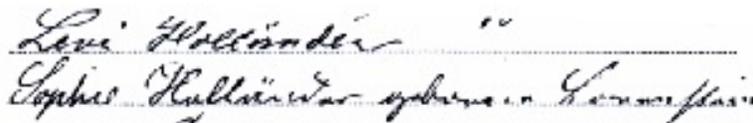
Maternal Great-Grandparents of Roger Fischler

The Parents of Joseph Holländer

Sophie Löwenstein (212 • 1) 1855.08.21, Battenberg -- 1940.02.29, Hilchenbach [B,M,P].

Levy Holländer (212 • 2) 1851.08.23, Elsoff -- 1939.06.27, Hilchenbach [B,M,P].

marriage: 1884.01.06, Battenberg [M].



The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive ink. The top signature reads "Levy Holländer" and the bottom signature reads "Sophie Holländer geborene Löwenstein". Both signatures are written on a dotted horizontal line.

1884.01.06, MA: signatures of Sophie Löwenstein and Levy Holländer

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The first two of their children, Joseph (my grandfather) and Bianca were born in Elsoff, in 1884 and 1886 respectively, while the third, Hedwig, was born in Hilchenbach in 1889. Thus, the couple moved to Hilchenbach sometime between 1886 and 1889. According to a note from Hedwig Holländer, Johanna Holländer, Levi's sister (see below) raised Joseph and Bianca. This may have been for the first few years while the couple were establishing themselves in Hilchenbach. At first they rented a house (Dammstrasse 11) in the town centre and then around 1890 they purchased the house (Mülenweg 25) indicated by the arrow in the centre of the photograph [SASS]. The railway station is indicated by the arrow on the left; see the photograph at the start of the chapter.

Sophie Löwenstein lived in the house until she passed away in 1940. From 1940 until 1942 my mother's parents, Julie Sommer and Joseph Holländer, lived there until they were sent to a death camp in Poland.



Mülenweg 25, early 1900s

In 1891 Levy Holländer built a slaughterhouse which was attached to the house. Thanks to all the documents sent to me by Herr Gämlich [GAML] we have documents and plans relating to this construction.^{DVD} The first photograph shows the official announcement of his request, while the second has the signature of Levy Holländer on a bill of sale for what I read as “Kalbfleisch” (veal):

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Öffentlicher Anzeiger

als Beilage zum 12. Stücke des Amtsblattes.

Ausgegeben Arnsherg, den 21. März 1891.

VII. Gewerbliche Anlagen.

1490. Der Metzger Levi Holländer zu Hilchenbach beabsichtigt auf dem Grundstück Flur 17 Nr. 94 der Steuergemeinde Hilchenbach ein Schlachthaus zu errichten.

Fol. Hilchenbach, den *1. Feb.* 19*17*

Rechnung für *Wm. King Hoffmann*
von **L. Holländer**, Metzgerei u. Viehhandlung.

	<i>Am 1.6.5.6. Zuschüssen</i>	<i>5.45</i>	<i>48.90</i>
	<i>Leibrag erfüllen</i>		
	<i>H. 18/10 1927</i>		
	<i>Li. Holländer</i>		

children:

1. **Joseph Holländer** (212) 1884.09.13, Elsoff -- 1942.04, deported to Zamość, Poland; see above.
2. **Bianca Holländer** 1886.09.16, Elsoff -- 1942.04, deported to Zamość, Poland.
She married Karl Schaefer; children: Thekla, Else, Erna, Charlotte, Arthur.
3. **Hedwig Holländer** 1889.02.14, Hilchenbach -- 1983.11.04, Manchester, England.
She emigrated to the U.K. in June, 1939.
4. **Hugo Holländer** 1891.02.17, Hilchenbach -- 1942?, Palestine.
He married Agnes Heil; children: Hete, Wolfgang (Johnny Holland).
Hugo was a master pastry chef and had a very successful *Kaffeehaus* in Dortmund. Due to persecution by the Nazis the family fled to Palestine.
5. **Willi Holländer** 1893, Hilchenbach -- deported 1943, Birkenau (Auschwitz).
He married Elisabetha Sonnheim; children Arno, Lothar. They too perished.
6. **Arthur Holländer** 1895, Hilchenbach -- 1916.05.20, France.
He died fighting in WWI; the following is a copy of the announcement that the family published in a newspaper [GAML].

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7. **Ferdinand Holländer** 1898.05.03, Hilchenbach -- 1899.01.29, Hilchenbach.

8. **Edmund Holländer** 1900.08.18, Hilchenbach -- 1978, Israel.
He married Edith Abrahamson; children Heinz, Gideon.

My mother's album contained several photographs of Levy Holländer, including a formal one -- with a dedication on the back -- taken at the time of his eightieth birthday in 1931. I obtained several others from various family members.^{DVD} For Sophie Löwenstein the situation was quite the opposite, I did not have a complete photograph of her until I obtained the photograph on the left from Erna Schaefer:



We have two pictures from the celebration of their fiftieth wedding anniversary, which was on January 6, 1934. There are no leaves on the trees, so the celebration could well have taken place around that date. Notice that Sophie Löwenstein has

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twice been cut in half and that both times we only see her right side! There is a sheet on the DVD that identifies all the people. My mother is not in the picture, so perhaps she was the photographer, although these are not up to the standards of her other family pictures. By the time that this joyous celebration, complete with formal wear, took place, the Nazis were entrenched in power.



There is an anecdote in [ELKA] which is worth retelling. At a meeting of the local Nazi party -- this surely took place before they came to power -- Levy Holländer shouted out, "You are all a bunch of liars".



Hilchenbach: The Graves of Sophie Löwenstein and Levy Holländer

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The Two Times Maternal Great-Grandparents of Roger Fischler

We know the names of all four grandparents from the 1884 MA of Sophie Löwenstein and Levy Holländer. Further, we learn that the two fathers were deceased, that they had been cattle dealers, and that the mothers were still alive. The marriage took place in Battenberg, where the bride and her parents lived, whereas the groom and his parents lived in Elsoff; see the maps and discussion above.

The Parents of Sophie Löwenstein

Dochter des verstorbenen Kaufmanns Ernst
Ludwig Löwenstein und seiner Ehefrau
Johanna Löwenstein geb. Meyer wohnhaft
zu Hilchenbach

1884.04.06: Names of the parents of Sophie Löwenstein

Johanette Elsoffer (212 • 11) ca. 1832, Scharzenau -- 1894.04.06, Battenberg [LAGIS, BERL-2].

Her DD clearly states that she was sixty-two years old at the time of her death which would put her birth year ca. 1832.

Scharzenau is a town that lies between Elsoff and Bad Berleburg and is now part of the Bad Berleburg municipality. Interestingly this is the place where the Scharzenau Brethren (also known as the German Baptist Brethren ...), was first organized in 1708. It was one of many groups that broke away from various Lutheran and Reformed churches.^{DVD}

Levi Löwenstein (212 • 12) early 1800s -- b. 1874, Battenberg [BERL-2].

He is said to be deceased on the 1879 DD of his son Willi, below, and he does not appear in the registers for 1874 (the year that civil records started in Battenberg) through 1879.

marriage: b. 1855 (birth of Sophie Löwenstein).

children:

1. **Sophie Löwenstein** (212 • 1) 1855, Battenberg -- 1940.02.29, Hilchenbach; see above.
2. **Willi Löwenstein** 1861, Battenberg -- 1879.01.07, Battenberg [LAGIS].
His DD says that he was eighteen years old and that he had been born in Battenberg.

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3. "son", Battenberg -- *, USA.

He emigrated to the USA and married Amalie? Gutermann; children: Lester, Milton.

A note from my mother says that a brother of Sophie Löwenstein went to the USA and gives the name of his wife and children, but not the name of the brother! From the note I deduced that Amalie? Gutermann was the "Tante Löwenstein" to whom we went on occasion when I was a boy. Of course -- the story of my genealogical life -- it was never explained to me how "Tante Löwenstein" fitted into the grand scheme of things.

The Parents of Levy Holländer

N.B. The Joseph Holländer introduced just below is the grandfather of the Joseph Holländer -- the father of Ruth Holländer -- above. The identification numbers (212) and (212•22) are used to distinguish between them.

The names of the parents of Levy Holländer appear on his 1884 MA and we learn that his father was deceased.

The image shows a handwritten document snippet with several lines of text in cursive script. The text is written on a form with horizontal lines. The first line reads "Sohn des verstorbenen Kaufmanns". The second line reads "Joseph Holländer". The third line reads "geboren am 29. August 1804". The fourth line reads "zu Elsoff". The fifth line reads "Wohnort". The sixth line reads "Elsoff".

MA, 1884.04.06: Names of the parents of Levy Holländer

Rachel Schiff (212•21) 1810.07.11, Allendorf, Kreis Biedenkopf-- 1895.07.11, Elsoff [DIET-2, p.35, DA].

This Allendorf is not to be confused with the Allendorf (Eder) which is right next to Battenberg nor with the Allendorf (Frankenau), which is discussed in the chapter dealing with the common ancestors.

Joseph Holländer (212•22) 1804.08.29, Elsoff -- 1857.01.24, Elsoff [DIET-2, p.35].

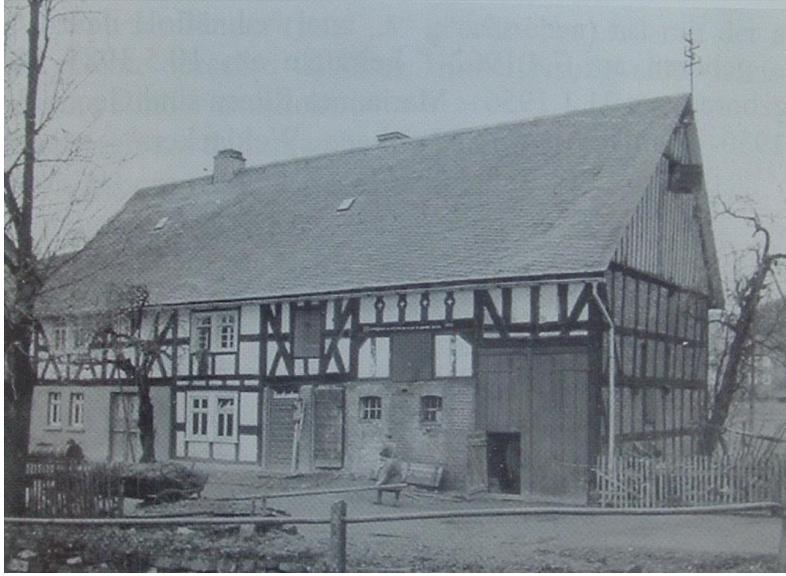
On the 1835 MA he is described as a *handelmann*, i.e. merchant, without further precision. I do not know if this category includes cattle dealers, which was the occupation of Levy Holländer.

marriage: 1835.03.02, Bad Berleburg [BERL-2, no.4]; see the image below in the section, "The Parents of Rachel Schiff".

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Rechels „Mehle“

In 1838 Rachel Schiff and Joseph Holländer purchased half of a house from the Zacharias family. The following, old but undated, photograph [BRA-1] shows what was probably the original appearance. The family lived on the left side.



In small towns houses were often referred to by the name of a person who had lived, or was still living, in the house (in fact, now in 2020 in Ottawa, we still refer to some houses on our street by the names of former owners). As the title -- which is part of a photograph of the explanatory plaque in front of the house -- indicates this house was referred to “Rechels” after Rachel Schiff. The origin of the the word “Mehle” is unknown. One suggestion is that it comes from *mühle* meaning “mill”, possibly because there had been a mill at that spot. Another suggestion relates the word to a supposed person named Müller.

After the death of Joseph Holländer in 1857, and particularly near the end of the nineteenth-century, parts were redistributed, taking into account the children who were deceased or who had emmigrated. In 1883 Rachel Schiff gave her part to Levi Holländer who in turn gave his part to his sister Johanna, so that by 1892 the latter became the sole owner. After her death in 1913 Levi resold her half of the house back to the Zacharias family.

children:

1. **Sarah Holländer** 1836.05.23, Elsoff -- * [BERL-2, no. 18].
2. **Wolf Holländer** 1838.09.06, Elsoff -- * [BERL-2, no. 37]. Braun, [p. 58], says that he emigrated to the USA.

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3. **Johanna Hanchen Holländer** 1840.10.22, Elsoff -- 1910.09.06, Elsoff. [BERL-2, no. 37; BRA-2, p. 33]

On the BA her name is given as the diminutive “Hanchen”, on the DA of her mother she signed “Johanna”.

There was another Johanna Holländer (1842.02.02, Elsoff -- 1911.08.01, Elsoff; [DIET-2, p. 35, grave 11; BRA-2, p. 43]) who, as the dates show, had a life span that virtually coincided with that of child 3. She was married to a Samuel Honey [grave 12] and they lived in the house -- referred to locally as “Mausches” -- that had belonged to Moses Holländer, the brother of Joseph Holländer (212 • 22). Could she have been a daughter of Moses Holländer?

4. **Meier Holländer** 1843.03.19, Elsoff -- * [BERL-2, no. 47]. The BA simply says “boy”; Braun, [p. 58], identifies him as Meier.

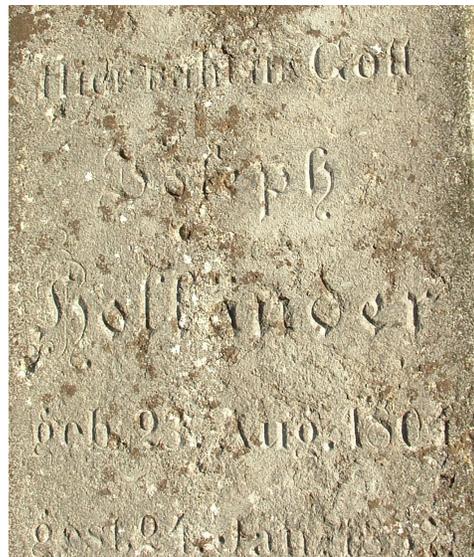
5. **Moses, Holländer** 1845.11.01, Elsoff -- 1910.03.30, Columbus, Ohio. [BERL-2, no. 53, DA].

This is indeed a strange situation. The DA gives the birth date as 1834.11.01 and says that he was 75 years, 4 months and 30 days old! The 1834 date would make him the oldest child.

6. **Joshua Holländer** 1849.04.06, Elsoff -- *. [BERL-2, there is no number on the sheet].

7. **Levi Holländer** (212 • 2) 1851.08.23, Elsoff-- 1939.06.27, Hilchenbach; see above.

The graves of Rachel Schiff and Joseph Holländer are numbers 1a and 1b in the notation of [DIET-2]. The left-hand picture was taken during our visit to Elsoff in 2010, the right-hand picture shows part of the inscription:



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Three Times Maternal Great-Grandparents of Roger Fischler

The Early Jews of Elsoff

These ancestors were born before 1800 and thus before the various changes in rulers and boundaries. Before listing them, let us consider what is known about the Jews of Elsoff before 1800. The following information is taken from [BRA-2, p. 11, 60 ff.]:

The first mention of a Jew in Elsoff dates from 1723 and there are further mentions in 1725 and 1728. In 1762 eleven out of fifty-seven houses belonged to Jews. Braun points out that this was an extremely high percentage and a further indication -- along with the lack of any mention in the ducal archives covering several centuries of any Jewish-Christian conflicts -- of how well the Jews of Elsoff were able to integrate into the local society, and in particular to own property.

A list of "Schutzjuden" (Jews having the right of sojourn) from 1765 contains eleven names in particular people named Wolf Abraham, Wolf Abraham Bürgel, and Samuel Wolff (apparently the same as the Wolff Samuel listed on [p. 11]). The name "Wolff" is of interest to us because the great-grandfather of Joseph Holländer (212) was named Wolff Holländer (see person 212 • 222 below). One could conjecture that one of the three people named in 1765 changed his name to Wolff Holländer. Whether Wolf Abraham and Wolf Abraham Bürgel are related, with one being the father of the other being the son is another unknown. See at the end of the chapter for the official declaration by the sons of Joseph Holländer that their family name was Holländer.

The question arises as to where these Jews came from. There were few Jews immediately to the west in the territories ruled by the various houses of Nassau. Similarly to the north, in what is the present state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Jews seem to have lived mainly in the northern parts of the state where Cologne, Muenster and Dortmund are located. Thus the most likely answer is that the Jews of Elsoff, and other towns in Wittgenstein, had moved west from neighbouring Hesse-Darmstadt where there was a Jewish population of over 19,000 in 1822.

The Parents of Johanette Elsoffer

From the 1894 DD of Johanette Elsoffer, the mother of Sophie Löwenstein, we know her father's full name and her mother's first name.

Frommet * (212 • 111) lived in Schwarzenau (now part of Bad Berleburg).

The DD leaves a space where the mother's family name would appear.

Wolf Elsoffer (212 • 112) lived in Schwarzenau (now part of Bad Berleburg).

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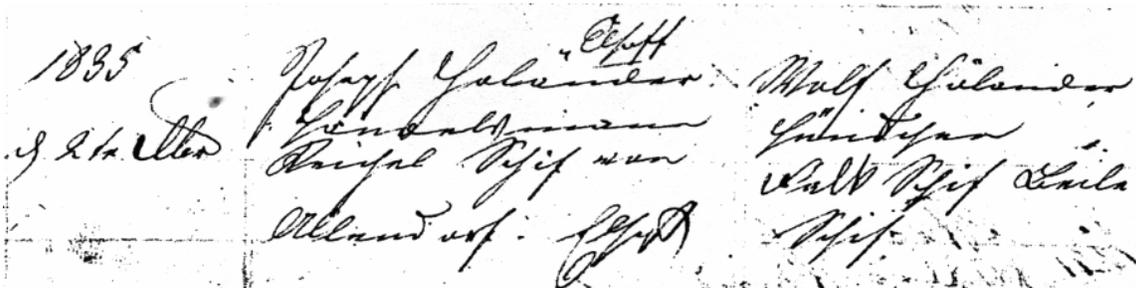
The family name of course suggests that it originated in Elsoff. A list of various people with the family name "Elsoffer" appears in [BRA-2, p.61], but there is no "Wolf Elsoffer".

The Parents of Levi Löwenstein

I was unable to obtain any information about the parents of Levi Löwenstein.

The Parents of Rachel Schiff

The names of the parents of Rachel Schiff are given on the 1835 MD of Rachel Schiff and Joseph Holländer:



1835.03.02, MD: Rachel Schiff and Joseph Holländer, with the names of their parents

The names of the parents of Rachel Schiff also appear on her DA, which was signed by her daughter Johanna:

The image shows a handwritten document from 1895. It reads "Tochter der zu Hollendorf verstorbenen Gabelman Salt Schiff und Gabelman Löwenstein".

1895.07.11, DD: Rachel Schiff

Bella Löwenstein (212 • 211) lived in Allendorf, Kreis Biedenkopf [BERL-2, no. 4; DA Rachel Schiff].

The transcription in [BERL-2] reads "Leila", but the first "L" has the little uptick which differentiates the capital "B" from the capital "L". That the first name is Bella is confirmed by the DA of her daughter Rachel Schiff.

I do not know if Bella Löwenstein is related to Levi Löwenstein, the father of Sophie Löwenstein.

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Falk Schiff (212 • 212) lived in Allendorf, Kreis Biedenkopf [BERL-2, no. 4; DA Rachel Schiff].

marriage: 1835.03.02, Bad Berleburg [BERL-2].

child:

1. **Rachel Schiff** (212 • 21) 1810.07.11, Allendorf, Kreis Biedenkopf -- 1895.07.11, Elsoff; see above.

The Parents of Joseph Holländer (212 • 222)

The names of his parents also appear on the above 1835 MD of Rachel Schiff and Joseph Holländer:

Hänschen (212 • 221) * -- 1838.11.29, Berleburg? [BERL-2, no. 15].

Wolf Holländer (212 • 222) * -- b. 1838.11.29, Berleburg?.

On the DD of his wife it is stated that she was a widow.

It is possible that his previous name was either Wolf Abraham, Wolf Abraham Bürgel or Wolff Samuel; see the discussion above under "The Jews of Elsoff".

children:

1. **Moses Holländer** [BERL-2, no. 1]

He is referred to as a *Handeljud*, i.e. a Jewish merchant, whereas three years later his brother Joseph is referred to simply as a merchant.

On 1832.06.20 he married [Maehe?? Meta??] Baumeister in Bad Berleburg. They had at least four children [no. 5, 10, 22, 3x?] of whom the last one listed did not survive the first year.

2. **Joseph Holländer** (212 • 22) 1804.08.29, Elsoff--1857.01.24, Elsoff; see above.

An Official Registration of the Name Holländer

On the 1835 MA of Joseph Holländer both his family name and that of his father Wolf are listed as "Holländer" and the same is true of the 1832 MA of Moses Holländer. We do not know when members of the family first adopted the name or whether it was required by a government. In any case in 1846 the Jews of the Arnsberg region of Prussian Westphalia were registered, with their old and new names. Here is the entry for the two Holländer brothers; on the right their former name is stated to also have been Holländer:

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1178	Günzenhüser	Moses		Günzenhüser
1179	Holländer	Joseph		Holländer
1180	Holländer	Moses		Holländer
1181	Rieber	Wolf		Rieber

In view of the likelihood that the family originally came from neighbouring Hesse-Darmstadt it is not at all evident that the name “Holländer” is related to the country of Holland. See the discussion in the section, “What’s in a Name” in the “Introduction”.
