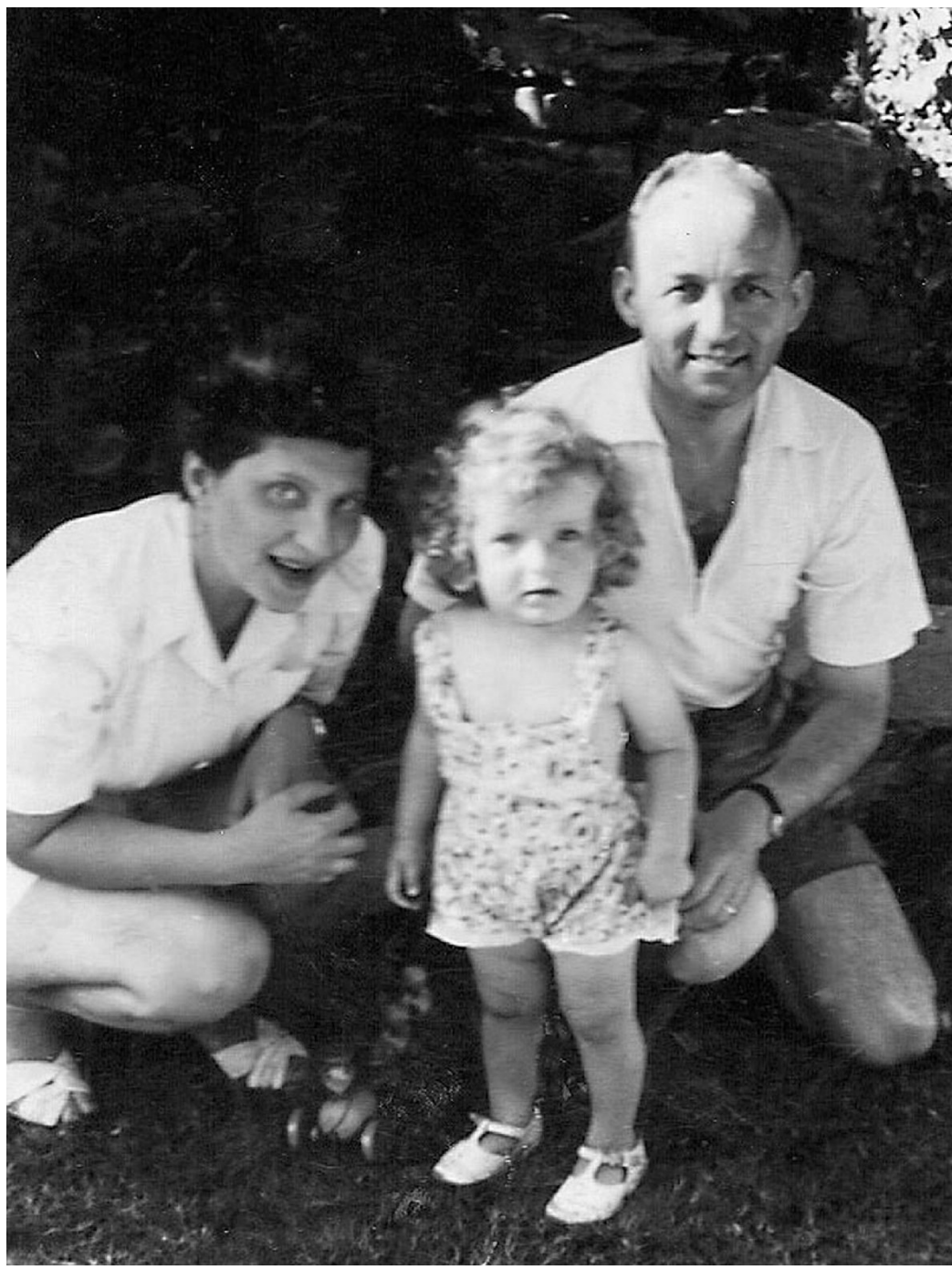


The Blum and Goldschmidt Family History

Germany and South Africa

Charles Bernitz





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For Ruth, with all of my love.

And in memory of her dear parents Paul David Blum and Grete Goldschmidt. Through our children and grandchildren the Blum and Goldschmidt ancestry has survived all attempts by the Nazi regime and their collaborators to exterminate these German Jewish families.

Charles Bernitz

London, November 2012

Prologue

I feel a duty to ensure that my children are properly aware of our ancestors' strivings over the years and the challenges they faced – often for sake of descendants whom they would never meet.

In this volume are recorded the histories of:

Ruth's father's father – Benjamin Blum, son of Meier Blum and Marjamme Plaut.

Her father's mother - Rickshen Hammerschlag, daughter of Moses Hammerschlag and Margolies Katzenstein.

Her mother's father - Jakob Goldschmidt.

Her mother's mother – Jettchen Plaut, daughter of Wolf Plaut and Betty Moses Frank.

They all lived within a small area in central Germany.

Ruth's parents were refugees*; they fled from Nazi persecution in Germany, and emigrated to South Africa in 1936. Ruth's mother Grete was able to bring her own parents (Jakob Goldschmidt and Jettchen Plaut) out of Germany to join them in South Africa. Paul's sister Meta also escaped to South Africa and Grete's brother fled to Israel. The majority of their families remained in Germany and perished in the Holocaust.

Ruth's family history can be traced to the early 1800's in Germany. I have tried to uncover where Ruth's ancestors came from, to describe how they lived and how their lives were changes by the circumstances affecting the Jews of their time.

* A refugee is defined by the United Nations High Commissioner as any person who is outside the country of his nationality, because he has or had well-founded fear of persecution by reason of his race, religion, nationality or political opinion, and is unable or, because of such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the Government of the country of his nationality or, if he has no nationality, to return to the country of his former habitual residence.

The Blum and Goldschmidt Families

A brief History of the Jews in Germany.

Evidence of Jews in the area now known as Germany dates back to the early 4th century. By the 8th century Jews were flourishing among the German tribes along the banks of the Rhine. The Jews for the most part lived in harmony with their newly Christian neighbours. They could hold public office, own land and work in whatever industries they chose; they spoke the same languages and often had the same names as the Germans. Many Germans even converted to Judaism. The Church had codified much of its doctrine, including the attitude that the Jews were a rejected people who must be separated decisively from the Christians. Jews worked as farmers and artisans and acquired a special reputation as merchants. Rulers and populace alike, desperate for the goods that only the Jews could provide, were unwilling to obey the dictums of the church. The emerging Jewish merchant class created a vast international network that traversed the Ashkenazi world. Jews would meet at regional fairs to learn about the fates of other communities, to network, and, of course, to trade. The economic and social connections that the Jews formed throughout the continent made them much more valuable than non-Jewish merchants, whose influence seldom reached beyond their immediate surroundings.

The "Golden Age" that resulted for European Jews was interrupted occasionally by anti-Semitism, but, for the most part, Jews lived happily. In the tenth century, as European Jewry's intellectual movements began to thrive, the study of the Talmud increased, and the German yeshivas in Mainz and Worms became centres of Jewish intellectualism. The Golden Age ended for the Jews in 1095 in Clermont, France. Pope Urban II had made a public appeal to the Christians of Europe to liberate the city of Jerusalem from the Muslim Turks, who had closed it to pilgrims. This appeal led to the First Crusade, which in turn resulted in the era of cooperation between Christians and Jews ending abruptly. The Jews were now viewed as outsiders, and were rumoured to be allied with the Muslims.

Crusaders would routinely massacre whole Jewish communities on their way to the Holy Land. Communities in Worms, Mainz and Cologne were devastated; in Mainz, for example, 1100 Jews were killed in one day in 1096, and the synagogue and other community buildings were razed.

The Pope occasionally condemned these attacks on Jews, but the condemnations were neither vocal nor frequent. Moreover, the lack of any punishment or reprisals against the violators of the Pope's orders gave the rioters implicit approval, and the attacks continued during the next seven crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries.

While none of these following Crusades were as devastating to the German Jews as the first, their lives and communities were nonetheless irrevocably changed. Jews ceased to be exclusively a merchant class; much of Europe was now accessible after having been traversed by the Crusaders and international trade could be performed by non-Jews. The Jews now became known as moneylenders, because Christians could not lend money at interest. Of course, this profession did little to endear the Jews to their neighbours, some of whom would just as soon kill the moneylender as repay his loan.

Jewish community life changed as well. Jews could no longer hold public office, or interact with their Christian neighbours. Instead, the Jews of each city banded together in ghettos. The Jewish community, or *kahal*, was autonomous. The ruler of the surrounding city would set limits on inhabitants of the ghetto, and they would always impose a heavy tax burden, but the collecting of taxes and enforcing of population quotas was all done by the Jewish governing board, the *kehilla*. Any interaction with non-Jewish rulers, businessmen, or neighbours was handled by the *shtadlan*, a community representative.

The collective isolation of the Jews also led to the rise of the Yiddish language. Jews had continued speaking a medieval dialect of German, even though the German language itself was advancing and changing in the outside world. As the Jews incorporated elements of Hebrew, Yiddish eventually became a language unto itself, often incomprehensible to the non-Jewish Germans.

The centuries that followed the Crusades were difficult ones for the Jews of Western Europe. In the thirteenth century, the Catholic Church instituted the Inquisition. Secular and religious rulers alike attacked “heretics” – a category that included Jews – with savagery, subjecting them to imprisonment, forced conversion and often death. Jews were accused of killing children for ritual purposes (the so-called blood libels) and during the Black Plague in the fourteenth century, of poisoning wells. These accusations, and the violence that followed them (Juddenschlacht, or “Jews slaughter”), led to the repeated expulsion of the Jews of Germany from their towns. The evictions continued through the middle ages and the Reformation. The ruler of each German city would grant the Jews a certain number of rights in a charter. This charter set the taxes that the Jews would pay, outlined the area of the city where they could live, and guaranteed them protection. The remainder of the laws were left in the hands of the kehilla. In essence, the Jews agreed to become the property of whichever ruler granted them a protective charter. This agreement occurred on the largest scale in 1236, when Emperor Frederick II issued the *Serva Camerae Nostrae* (“Servants of the Treasury”), which formally made the Jews the property of the empire.

Implicit in the charter agreements was the fact that the charter could be rescinded whenever the ruler of the region wished – and the regional rulers frequently did so. When a city-state expelled the Jewish population another autonomous city would invariably extend them a charter; their reason for doing so was generally economic. The Jews would settle in a new

location; eventually, the economic role they served would become unnecessary, as Christians began to be crowded out of their industries. When this happened, violence against the Jews inevitably ensued, and expulsion followed. In this way, the Jews were constantly wandering through Europe, residing in each city only temporarily. In general, they moved east. As a result, by the late fifteenth century, the centre of world Jewry had moved from Western Europe to Eastern Europe, with Jews especially concentrated in Poland.

One positive result of the Jews’ new economic station was the rise of the court Jew. Because Jews controlled money lending, the feudal lords in Germany became dependent on the more prominent Jews for funds. Often, the Jewish advisors were single-handedly responsible for helping a Lord to raise an army, build a palace or furnish some public facility. These advisors were sometimes able to help a Jewish community to escape a riot or an expulsion.

In general, the Jews migrated within Germany in the middle Ages from the towns on the Rhine in the south to the east and the north. By the thirteenth century, communities were forming in Munich, Vienna and Berlin, which would become important Jewish cities in Germany in the modern era.

During the Reformation period, Jews continued to be oppressed both physically and economically – those who were not expelled shouldered a crippling tax burden. Martin Luther, after failing to convert the Jews to Protestantism, was responsible for further religiously-inspired violence.

The status of the Jews began to change in the seventeenth century, as absolutist states became common. The rulers of these kingdoms viewed the interests of the state as supreme, and began to realize that the Jews were a valuable commodity that was wasted when expelled. Many rulers, including those of Prussia, Hamburg, Brandenburg and Pomeranian

welcomed Jews into their territories. However, the invitation came with numerous strings attached. Jewish life was highly regulated to ensure that the state extracted as much value as possible from them; laws were issued addressing employment, family life, residency and communal affairs. Jewish expulsions became rare as this era progressed.

Readmission of the Jews to many German states continued in the eighteenth century, by which time the charters extended them rights similar to those of other citizens. At the same time, however, the autonomy that had been a hallmark of Jewish communal life for centuries began to decline. As Jewish rights increased their independent governance was withdrawn by the rulers. For example, when Frederick II revised the charter of the Jews of Prussia in 1750, he included strict rules regarding the workings of the *kahal*.

The Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, was an intellectual movement in Europe that lasted from the 1770's to the 1880's. Literally, Haskalah comes from the Hebrew word *sekhel*, meaning "reason or intellect" and the movement was based on rationality. It encouraged Jews to study secular subjects, to learn both the European and Hebrew languages, and to enter fields such as agriculture, crafts, the arts and science. The maskilim (followers of the Haskalah) tried to assimilate into European society in dress, language, manners and loyalty to the ruling power. The Haskalah eventually influenced the creation of both the Reform and Zionist movements. Moses Mendelssohn, a philosopher (1726-1789) is considered the father of the Haskalah. Frederick the Great declared him a "Jew under extraordinary protection" and he won a prize from the Prussian Academy of Sciences on his "treatise on evidence in the metaphysical sciences." Writing in German, the language of the scholars, he represented Judaism as a non-dogmatic, rational faith that is open to modernity and change. He called for secular education and a revival of Hebrew language and literature. He

initiated a translation of the Torah into German, tried to improve the legal situation of the Jews and the relationship between Jews and Christians, and argued for Jewish tolerance and humanity. Many Jews left the ghetto to pursue education (if and when a school would admit them), brought their disputes to secular as opposed to religious courts and befriended non-Jews.

The decline of the *kahal* continued in the aftermath of the French Revolution. When the leaders of the revolution declared in 1789 that all the French would be granted "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," they included the Jews. Thus, the Jews became full citizens of France, a status that was later withdrawn, but then reinstated by Napoleon. This emancipation, along with the revolution against the British happening in the New World, set a precedent that began to be followed in Germany. Various cities and states granted the Jews full equality, or else instituted reforms that were meant to culminate in emancipation at a later date. In 1812, Prussia became the first German state to grant full citizenship to its Jewish inhabitants, and the *kahal* ceased to exist.

The new status of the Jews was not achieved without opposition. Many peasants were less willing to let go of their conception of the Jews than the Jews were to let go of their conceptions of themselves. In 1819, the masses gave vent to their frustration at the Jews' rapid economic and political rise in the "Hep Hep" riots (for some time, sporadic anti-Jewish violence had been accompanied by the rallying call "Hep! Hep!" The slogan became a widespread one in 1819 when German Jews were the targets of widespread rioting).

The new, open, cosmopolitan atmosphere had its impact on religion as well. Frustrated with traditional observance, which they viewed as overly restrictive and irrelevant to modern life, many Jews joined the movement. The first Reform Temple was founded in

Hamburg in 1817, and it marked a dramatic departure from the traditional prayer service. Soon, Reform Temples opened elsewhere too, and Berlin became the centre of the movement. Reform was opposed by the "Neo-orthodox" school of Frankfort, which emphasized strict traditionalism combined with worldly pursuits. At the same time the groundwork for the Conservative movement was being laid in Breslau.

The Jews of Germany were by now an overwhelmingly urban, professional class. Many of them took part in the German revolution of 1848, and in the resulting Frankfort parliament. The "Basic Laws of the German People" advanced by the parliament reinforced that Jews were citizens in full, regardless of their religious leanings. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anti-Semitism again became more visible in Germany, but was dismissed by the urbane, assimilated Jews as merely a passing social phenomenon.

A higher percentage of German Jews fought in World War I than that of any other ethnic, religious or political group in Germany; some 12,000 died for their country. Many German Jews received high political positions such as foreign minister and vice chancellor in the Weimar Republic.

The Weimar constitution was the work of a German Jew, Hugo Preuss, who later became minister of the interior. Mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews was common from the 19th century. Anti-Semitism again became more pronounced in the aftermath of World War I in Weimar Germany.

For the most part, however, the prosperity and legal equality of the Jews continued unabated until Hitler's rise to power in 1933, and the ensuing discrimination

and violence. Jewish social life in the inter-war period included a struggle between Jewish nationalism and assimilation.

The foremost proponent of Jewish autonomy was Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of Zionism, who lived in Vienna. In terms of scholarship, German Jews enjoyed a "Jewish Renaissance" in the early twentieth century. The Hebrew language was resurrected as a living language and Yiddish drama and newspapers flourished. Some Jews immigrated in this period, mostly to America or Palestine; many more did so after the rise of Nazism in 1933. The majority of Jews, however, remained in Germany, with catastrophic results.

The Nazi takeover of 1933, which resulted in Adolph Hitler becoming chancellor, was a stunning blow with the persecution of the Jews becoming active Nazi policy. On April 1, 1933, Jewish doctors, shops, lawyers and stores were boycotted. Only six days later, a Law was passed, banning Jews from being employed in government. This law meant that Jews were now indirectly and directly dissuaded or banned from privileged and upper-level positions reserved for Aryan Germans. From then on, Jews were forced to work at more menial positions, beneath non-Jews.

On August 2, 1934, President Paul von Hindenburg died. A new president was not appointed. Instead the powers of the chancellor and president were combined into the office of a Führer. This, and a tame government with no opposition parties, allowed Adolf Hitler to assume totalitarian control of law-making. The army swore an oath of loyalty personally to Hitler, giving him power over the military; this position allowed him to easily create more pressure on the Jews than ever before.



On April 1, 1933, members of the SS positioned themselves outside Jewish-owned businesses all over Germany, to deter customers. These Storm troopers outside Israel's Department Store in Berlin are holding signs that read "Germans! Defend yourselves! Don't buy from Jews."

In 1935 and 1936, the pace of persecution of the Jews increased. In May 1935 Jews were forbidden to join the Armed Forces and in the same year, anti-Jewish propaganda appeared in Nazi German shops and restaurants. The Nuremberg Laws officially defined Judaism in terms of race, and withdrew citizenship from all Jews. On September 15 1935, the Law for the "Protection of German Blood and Honor" was passed, preventing marriage between Jews and non-Jews. From November quarter- and half-Jews were no longer citizens (Reichsbürger) of their own country, but became Reichsangehöriger (Subject of the State).

In 1936, Jews were banned from all professional jobs, effectively preventing them from exerting any influence in education, politics, higher education and industry. As a result, there was nothing to stop the anti-Jewish actions which spread across the Nazi-German economy.

All of this allowed Hitler more direct control over government and political attitude towards Jews in "Nazi Germany". In 1937 and 1938, new laws were implemented, and the segregation of Jews from the

Aryan German population was started. As of March 1, 1938, government contracts could no longer be awarded to Jewish businesses. From September Aryan doctors could only treat Aryan patients. Provision of medical care to Jews was already hampered by the fact that Jews were banned from being doctors or holding any professional jobs.

From August 17, 1938 Jews with first names of non-Jewish origin had to add the name Israel (males) or Sarah (females) to their names, and a large J was to be imprinted in their passports beginning October 5. On November 15 Jewish children were banned from going to normal schools. By April 1939, nearly all Jewish companies had either collapsed under financial pressure and declining profits, or had been forced to sell out to the Nazi German government. This further dehumanised the Jews and further separated them from the German populace.

On November 9, 1938 the SS ordered that Jewish businesses and synagogues be razed. The storefronts of Jewish shops and offices were smashed and vandalised, and many synagogues were destroyed by fire. Ninety one Jews were killed, and another 30,000, mostly able bodied males, were arrested and sent to the newly formed concentration camps. When the full extent of the damage was discovered, Hitler ordered it to be blamed on the Jews. themselves. Collectively, the Jews were made to pay back one billion Reichsmark in damages, the fine being raised by confiscating 20 per cent of all Jewish property. The Jews also had to repair all damages at their own expense.

In March, 1941, Hitler officially ordered the implementation of the "Final Solution" which resulted in Jews being forced to wear a yellow star as identification, and being transferred en masse to concentration camps throughout Europe, where they were put to work as slave labourers, and killed in gas chambers and crematoria.

On May 19, 1943, Germany was declared *Judenrein* ("free of Jews").



The German passport issued to Jacob and Jettchen on 2nd March 1939. Note the addition of the names Israel and Sara, and the red J stamped on the front page. The unfamiliarity of these additions to their names can be seen from the lower photo, where Jacob had obviously forgotten to sign as Jacob Israel, and had to add the middle name in the line above.



The Great Synagogue of Essen, Germany, set on fire during the Kristallnacht.



**Ruth's Ancestors, and their origins.
The Blum, Goldschmidt, Hammerschlag and Plaut families.**

As can be seen, Ruth's ancestors were all living in fairly close proximity, in a few different towns in central Germany. The families appear to have known each other well and there were a number of different

instances across the generations of marriages between three of the families. Indeed, Ruth parents Paul and Grete had a great-grandparent in common. The families were Blum, Hammerschlag and Plaut.



Frielendorf

Frielendorf is a community in what was the Hesse Nassau district of Hesse in Germany . It was one of the almost two hundred towns and villages in the area which all had a Jewish community. Each was surrounded by similar neighbouring communities, with much contact between them.



In the 1400's there was a settlement called Frilingen in the Hersfeld region. This became Frilingendorf, and by the early 1500's was being called Frielendorf. Early records show that there were Jews in Frielendorf from as early as 1587, when 'Jacob the Jew' was allowed to settle by Count Wilhelm IV.

Church prosecution records indicate that in the years 1668 to 1695 a number of Jews were prosecuted for trading on Sunday ; they were named as 'David the Jew, Moses the Jew', etc.

It would appear that surnames were not yet being used. Town records from 1749 include 22 Jews. Frielendorf, an attractive market town, developed rapidly from that time, helped by it's four fairs.

It's convenient location between Homberg and Ziegenhain. An official record of Jews in 1840 (from the state archive of Marburg) lists 14 Jewish families, (105 people) in Frielendorf, including:

- Blum, Isaac Elias Wife+7 children- -Horse dealer
- Plaut, Abraham Wife + 8 children - Grocer/chandler
- Blum, Leiser Wife + 3 children - Horse dealer
- Plaut, Hanne David Wife + 8 children - dyer

At first the Jewish community used part of the house of Elias Blum as their Synagogue. In 1834 they purchased half of a large barn to be used as a shul (at 75 1/2 Steinweg, which is now Hauptstrasse 34 in modern Frielendorf). This remained in use until the last Jews had left Frielendorf in 1937. It was destroyed on Kristallnacht in November 1938. In 1843 the Jewish elementary school was established. The Synagogue membership roll of February 1879 listed these heads of household who paid membership fees - Elias Blum, Isaac Blum, Meier Blum, Mendel Levi, Wolf Plaut, Leiser Plaut, Abraham Plaut, David Plaut I, and David Plaut II.



Original site of the Synagogue in Hauptstrasse 34 (building in centre), and as it is today (next page).

A Jewish elementary school was started in 1843, with Marcus Lion as the head teacher until his death in

1926. The syllabus followed was that of the local church schools. In 1910 there were 45 pupils, but by 1937 he school had closed.



The shul was central to the community and lives of the Jewish community. An article from the magazine "The Israelite", reported the 80th anniversary of the Frielendorf Chevra Kadisha:

"The 80th anniversary of the Chevra Kadisha in Frielendorf fell on Sunday 22 April 1928, and was celebrated by the community with a ceremony held on the school and synagogue premises. The prelude to the celebration was the beautiful Shabbat service, with a poignant homily delivered by (Rabbi?) Wetzler, the Hebrew teacher, Cantor and Shochet. The chairman of the synagogue, Mr I. Moses, appointed the six oldest members as honorary members (of the Chevra Kadisha). On Sunday morning the community

made their way to the cemetery to honour the deceased members in a remembrance service. After the evening service the provincial Rabbi Dr. Cohn from Marburg addressed the community with deeply thoughtful words. The festivities culminated with a banquet and a nice party, all energetically organised by the Rabbi Cohn".

A list of traders authorised to have booths in the Frielendorf markets (dated 1879) includes:

Name Place of origin .
 Leiser Blum Frielendorf
 Hirsch Blum Borken
 David Plaut Frielendorf
 Leiser Plaut Frielendorf

In common with all Jews in Germany they were subject to trade and other restrictions. The Jewish population then started to decline, with 129 remaining in 1905, 85 in 1933 and just 14 by 1938. The last Jews in Frielendorf were deported to the East in 1942.



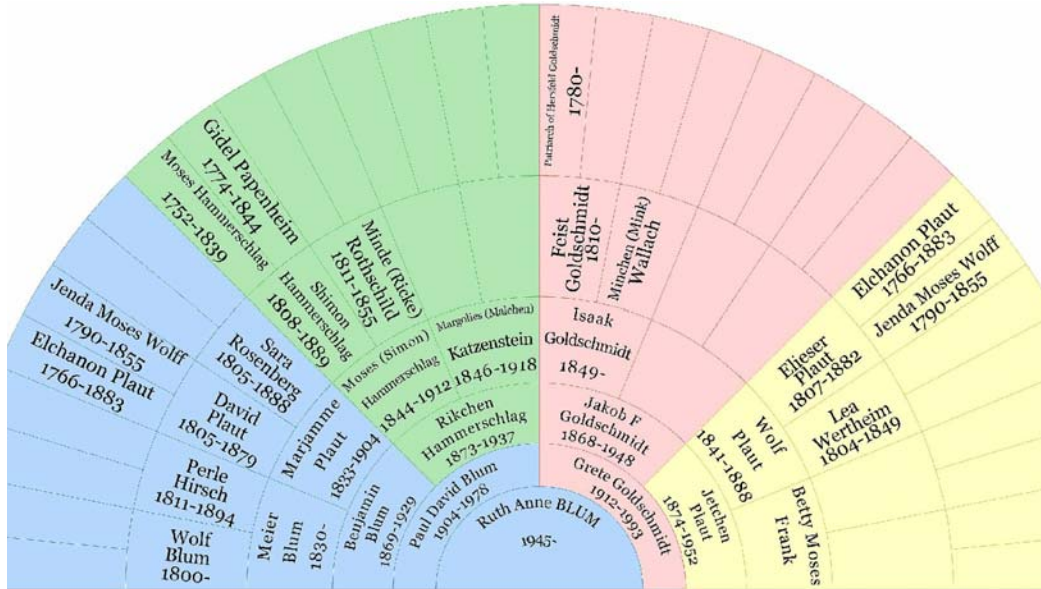
The building at Hauptstrasse 42, formerly the home of Moritz Blum (a horse dealer), his wife Sara and children Elsa and David. As was the custom, their business premises (including stables) were located on the ground floor, with living quarters on the upper two floors.

The Blum, Hammerschlag and Plaut Families.

Ruth's father, Paul David Blum was born in Frielendorf, Germany. There is evidence that three earlier generations of the Blum family had lived in Frielendorf, from about 1800. Paul was descended from the Hammerschlag family on his mother's side (see Hammerschlag family notes, page 29), and from

the Plaut family on his paternal grandmother's side – in fact he and Ruth's mother Grete had a great-grandfather, Elchanon Plaut, in common. . There is also evidence that at least five earlier generations of his Plaut ancestors had lived in Frielendorf, since the early 1700's.

The Ancestors of Ruth Anne Blum



Wolf (Binyomin) Blum***Ruth's great-great grandfather***

Although we have no direct information about Wolf's birth or death, we know from the gravestone inscription of Perle Blum (born Hirsch) that she was the wife of Wolf Blum. Perle was born on the 4th May 1811 and died on the 15th November 1894. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Wolf was born circa 1800 to 1810.



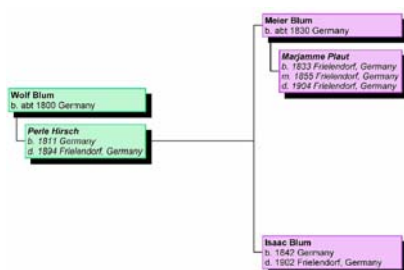
Above - the grave of Perle Blum. It reads: Here rests Perle, born Hirsch, wife of Wolf Blum. Born 4 May 1811. Died 15 Nov 1894. The Jewish cemetery in Frielendorf is well cared for today, with many gravestones repaired or restored. However many were destroyed during the Nazi era. Those stones that remain are a rich source of genealogical information.

From the earliest currently available civil records of the time (1840) we know that Elias Isaac and Wolf Blum were horse dealers. They were most likely brothers. Whether or not Wolf and his brother were the first Blum's in Frielendorf is not certain. Wolf and Perle had two sons, Meier and Isaac. Meier was Ruth's great-grandfather.

An article published in the journal "Der Israelit" in July 1885 gives us an insight into their family life at that time. The writer recalls an incident from his early years, when he was living in Frielendorf, and writes in detail about the accidental death of Elias Blum some 30 years previously, in 1855. The article reads: "In the province of Hesse-Nassau, in the district of Ziegenhain, lies the market town of Frielendorf. A Jew from the town named Elias Blum, a very honest and respected horse dealer, strongly built and in his mid-fifties, travelled late on an autumn day to the city of Treysa, some 3 hours distant. Having been delayed by his business until the late afternoon, he commenced his journey home. His route led him towards Ziegenhain. Elias decided to take a shortcut along a footpath across a large meadow between Ziegenhain and Treysa; this shortcut is known to shorten the journey time to 45 minutes. It was very stormy weather; the air was hazy and humid and it became dark early. This could have been the reason that Blum strayed from the footpath and fell into the swamp. Away from the footpath, these meadows are marshy places, which become impassable after prolonged rains. Very close to Ziegenhain the unfortunate Blum had fallen into a marsh, and his entire body sank into the swamp. He would probably have called for help, but his voice may have been drowned out by the storm. When he did not return home either that evening or the next day his family was understandably overcome with fear and anxiety. For weeks and months they had searched the whole area and every pool of water, but in vain. Meanwhile, winter had set in and had spread a blanket of snow over the fields and meadows. When spring came, and the ground began to dry, the owners of the meadow began preparing their fields. In a marshy area the worker's noticed a dark object, which appeared to rise out from the swamp, resembling a human head, and surrounded by squawking ravens. As they drew nearer they found the body of the unfortunate Blum, buried up to his head. The family were informed. They removed the body, and buried him in the Jewish cemetery. Elias was Ruth's great-great-uncle.

The Descendants of Wolf Blum and Perle Hirsch

Wolf and Perle had three children, a daughter Marjanne and two sons Meier and Isaac.



Isaac Blum 1842 -1902 *Ruth's great-uncle*

Much of our knowledge of Isaac is derived from his tombstone in the Frielendorf Jewish cemetery. The original stone has been vandalised and badly damaged. The Frielendorf authorities were responsible for the restoration of the Jewish Cemetery, and of individual headstones. As much as possible was reconstructed within a new frame, and together with similarly restored headstones, has been erected alongside the perimeter fence of the cemetery.

The Hebrew script was translated and interpreted by Rabbi Meier Salasnik:

“A man of faith, complete

His deeds were good and whole

He rose early and stayed late for Torah”

The following two lines are not clearly legible, but Rabbi Salasnik believes they indicate that Isaac was involved in cultural or scientific fields.



The Gravestone of Isaac Blum

A translation of the inscription:

Yitzchok ben Benjamin Blum.

Died with a good name on Thursday 25 Adar 5662 and buried on Sunday 28 of that month. German:

Here rests in peace the well loved and respected Isaak Blum.

b. 12 February 1842 d. 3 April 1902

I have not found any records that indicate that Isaac ever married or had a family. This is supported by the impersonal wording on his headstone. Isaac was a registered as a taxpayer in Frielendorf in 1879 (when he was 37 years old). It is therefore possible that he spent his working life in Frielendorf. He may possibly have been a teacher at the Jewish school?

Meier Blum (1830) and Marjamme Plaut (1833-1904)
Ruth's paternal great-grandfather and great-grandmother

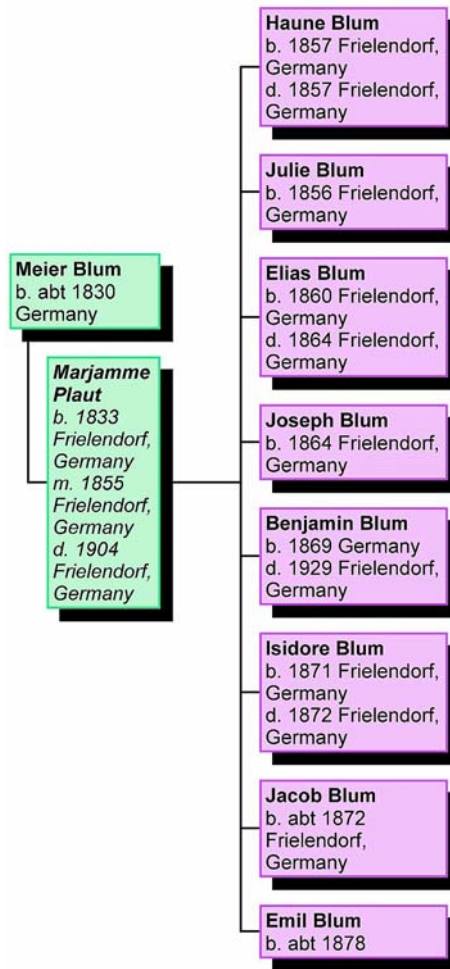
Meier Blum was born in Frielendorf in 1823. He was, like both his father and his son, a horse dealer. Horses were used extensively by the industries around Frielendorf. Besides farming, there were open cast coal mines and brick factories in the area. The horse dealer of those times was the equivalent of the modern motor dealer. Meier married Marjamme Plaut on the 11th December 1855 in Frielendorf. The Plaut family of Frielendorf were ancestors of both of Ruth's parents.

Marjamme and Meier had eight children. Three are known to have died very young. Their fifth child was Benjamin, Ruth's grandfather. Their fourth child was a boy named Moritz, who was born in 1862. Moritz married Sara Harburger (born 1871). They had two children David Friederich (Fritz), born in 1900, and Elsa, born in 1904. As was the family tradition, Moritz (Ruth's great-uncle) was a horse dealer, and reputedly a very successful one. He died in 1935. Sara then left Frielendorf, and moved with daughter Elsa to Kassel. Their movements from there are not known to me. Their son Fritz went to Argentina.



Moritz is buried in the Frielendorf Jewish Cemetery. His tombstone is well preserved. The inscription reads:
 Hebrew: Here is buried a man of faith, complete and upright, fearing God, loving truth and a worker for righteousness.
 Menachem ben Meier,
 Passed away 17 Adar II 5695
 German: Here rests my loving Husband, our devoted father Moritz Blum.
 Born 29.8.1862.
 Died 1.4.1935.

The Descendants of Meier Blum and Marjamme Plaut



The Plaut Family.

The Name Plaut

The name Plaut appeared in Germany long before the Jews were compelled to take family names, and is to be found in records (and especially on tombstones) as early as 1590. Many town and city records for Hessen including birth, death, and marriage records, and many synagogue registries record the name Plaut as the last name for members of Jewish families. Joseph Plaut, known as "Joseph the Jew", a married man born about 1590 in Vacha (possibly modern Fulda) is included in the records of Schmalkaden. There is a grave of Menachem ben Ruben (Plaut), who was buried in 1645 in the Altona Jewish cemetery. Records show that Joseph Plaut from Witzhausen visited the Leipzig Fair in 1677, as did Victor Plaut from Sontra in 1691 and again in 1692. Jac Hartig Plaut was living in Wandsbeck in 1734. Hamburg records mention Mordecai Gumpel Plaut who died "a very old man" in 1750. He was the son of the above-mentioned Joseph Plaut. The Rauschenberg birth records for 1770-1876 show that a Simon Plaut was born in 1780 to Michael Plaut and his wife, Sara. By contrast, most of the other families recorded at that time had no family names.

The Frielendorf Plaut Family

There was a large Plaut family living in Frielendorf, dating back at least six generations to the 1730's. The first Plaut to appear in Frielendorf records was Abraham Plaut. Whilst we do not know where he came from we do know that his first son Elchanon was born in Frielendorf in 1766. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Abraham himself was born circa 1730-1740.

A German historical description of Elchanon reads: "A husky fellow, he was drafted by the Kurfuerst of Hessen, who saw him on the road and was impressed by his height". He became the first Jewish soldier in Hessen. Elchanon married Jenda Moses Wolff. She was born in 1790, and was 24 years younger than himself. They would have been married prior to 1805, when their first child's birth is recorded (it is possible, based on the substantial age gap, that Jenda was not Elchanon's first wife). They had nine children.

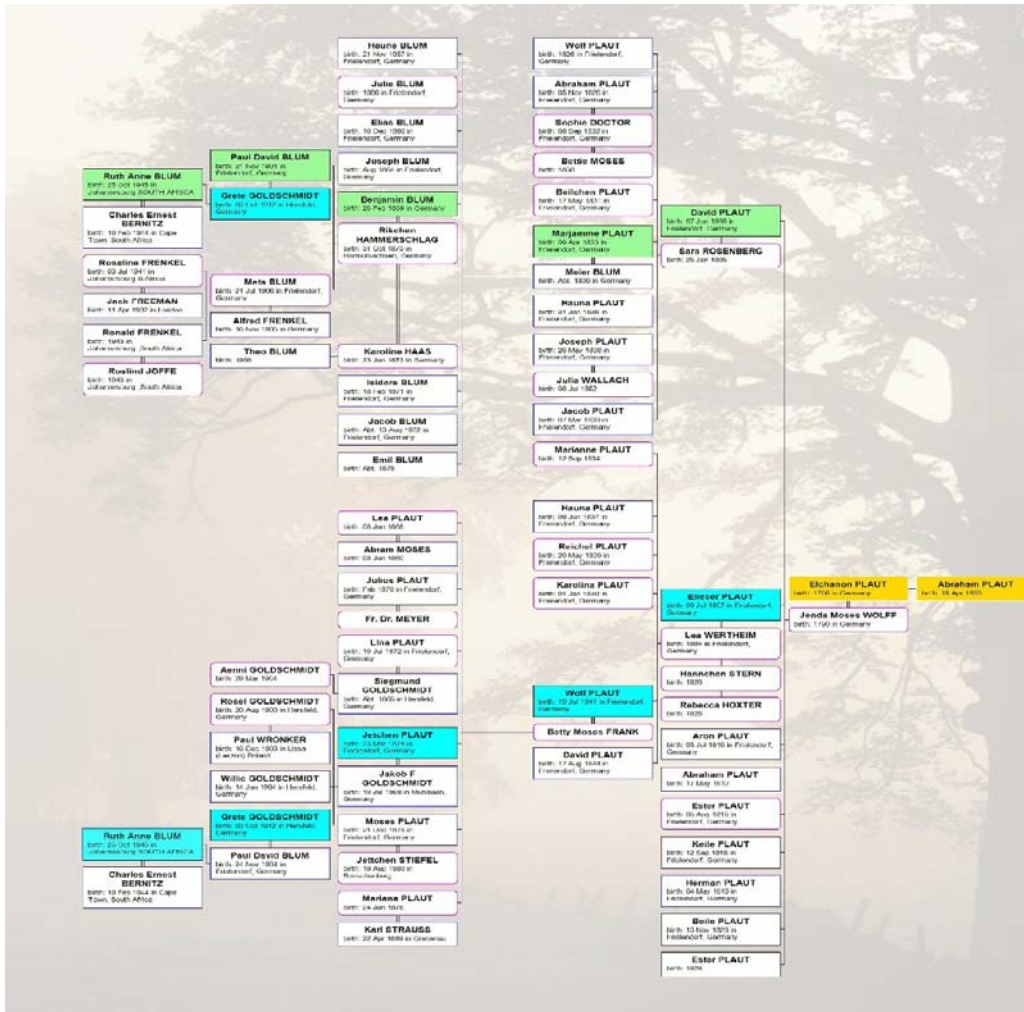
The eldest, David (1805-1879) was Ruth's Paternal great-great-grandfather. His daughter Marjamme Plaut was married to Meier Blum, and was therefore Ruth's paternal great-grandmother.

Their second son Elieser was Ruth's Maternal great-great-grandfather. His granddaughter Jetchen Plaut was Ruth's mother. Consequently, Ruth's maternal great-grandmother and paternal great-grandfather were first cousins.

There were many other Plaut families, or branches of the family in Germany. Genealogical research by Elizabeth S. Plaut into her family tracked the relationships between more than 11,000 people, and the towns from which the Plaut families originated.

From her research we have been able to establish that there were close links, and multiple marriages between the families of Ruth's ancestors, including the Blum and Hammerschlag (paternal) and Goldschmidt (maternal) families.

The Descendants of Elchanon Plaut of Frielendorf including the Ancestors in common of Paul David Blum and Grete Goldschmidt



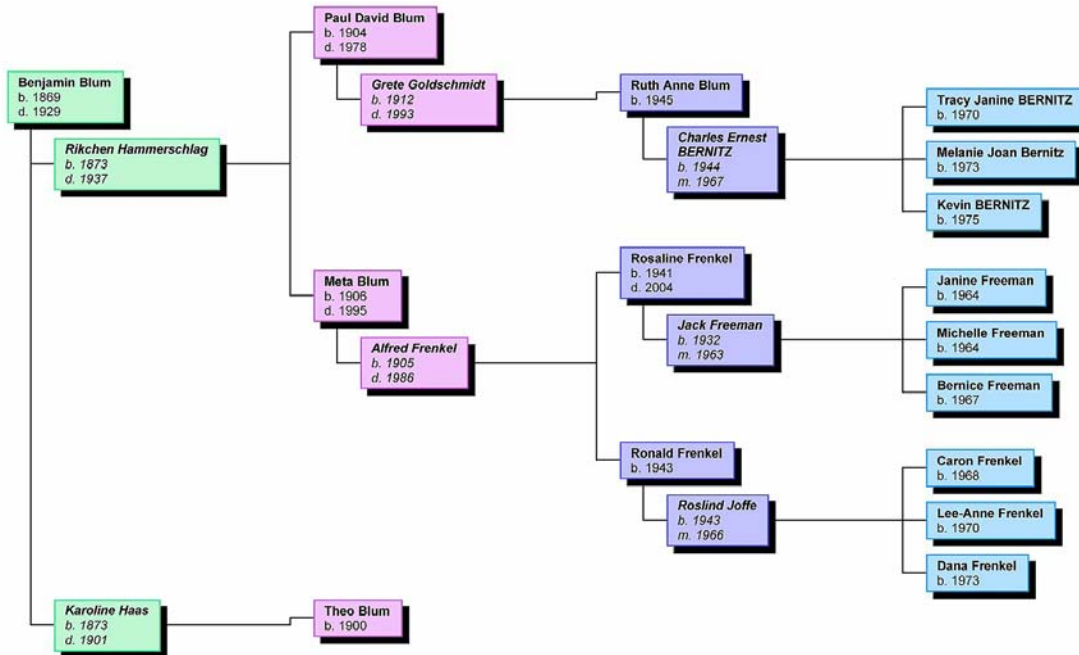


Above: Benjamin Blum, his second wife Rickshen, their children Paul and Meta and their half-brother Theo Blum lived at No. 28 Witze Street (the house is second from right, located on the river bank).



Right: The inscription above the door at Witze 28. The house was built in 1728.

Benjamin Blum (1869 -1929)
Ruth's paternal grandfather



**First marriage to Karoline Haas
 (1873 – 1901)**

Karoline was born in 1869, and died in November 1901, aged 28. They had one child, a son named Theo. Details of their marriage are unknown, and there are no records of when Theo was born. It is possible that Karoline died giving birth to Theo in 1901.

**Second Marriage to Rikchen Hammerschlag
 (1873 - 1937)**
Ruth's paternal grandmother

Rikchen was born in Germany in 1873. As was the custom, Benjamin as a young widower with a son was to quickly remarry. Although the date of their marriage is not known, it must have been after Karoline died (November 1901), and about a year before Paul was born (November 1904) - therefore around 1902-1903. They had two children – Paul David and Meta, born in 1906.

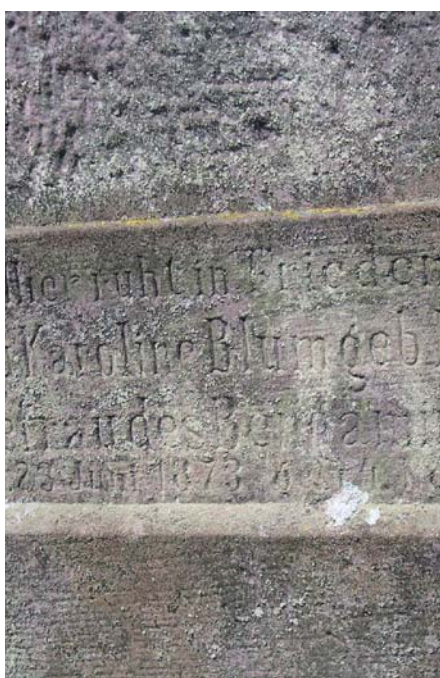
Clockwise from right:

The grave of Karoline, first wife of Benjamin Blum.

Ruth at the grave of her great-grandfather Benjamin Blum, *Frielendorf Jewish Cemetery, June 2003.*

The grave of Ruth's great-grandmother Rickshen Hammerschlag, after whom Ruth was named.

The WWI War Memorial in the Jewish cemetery in Frielendorf. It was erected by the Frielendorf Synagogue Community, in honour of their fallen heroes who died in the First World War. One was Julius Plaut, brother of Ruth's grandmother. Born on 28th May 1872, he died on the 28th October, 1917, aged 35.



The Hammerschlag Family of Harmutsachsen

The third ancestral line from which Ruth is descended is the Hammerschlag family. Hammerschlag is not an uncommon surname. There were numerous Hammerschlag families living in Germany, many in the Hessen area. Not all were Jewish; records show that there were also Catholic and Protestant Hammerschlag families. Undoubtedly many of the Jewish ones were related. Ruth's Hammerschlag ancestors originated from the town of Harmutsachsen, near Kassel. There are records available that show that there were a number of marriages between them and members of the Plaut and Goldschmidt families.

Harmutsachsen, a village with about 500 inhabitants, is located in northwest Hesse, 2 km from Waldkappel. The village is documented as far back as 1195. A Jewish community was noted in 1324. The synagogue which was built in 1833, was destroyed on Kristallnacht. Members of the Hammerschlag family emigrated to the United States, England, South Africa and Australia. However large numbers remained in Germany, and many perished in the Holocaust. The first recorded Hammerschlag in Harmutsachsen is Moses, Ruth's great-great-great-grandfather, born in 1752. Hammerschlags continued to reside in the village until the Holocaust.

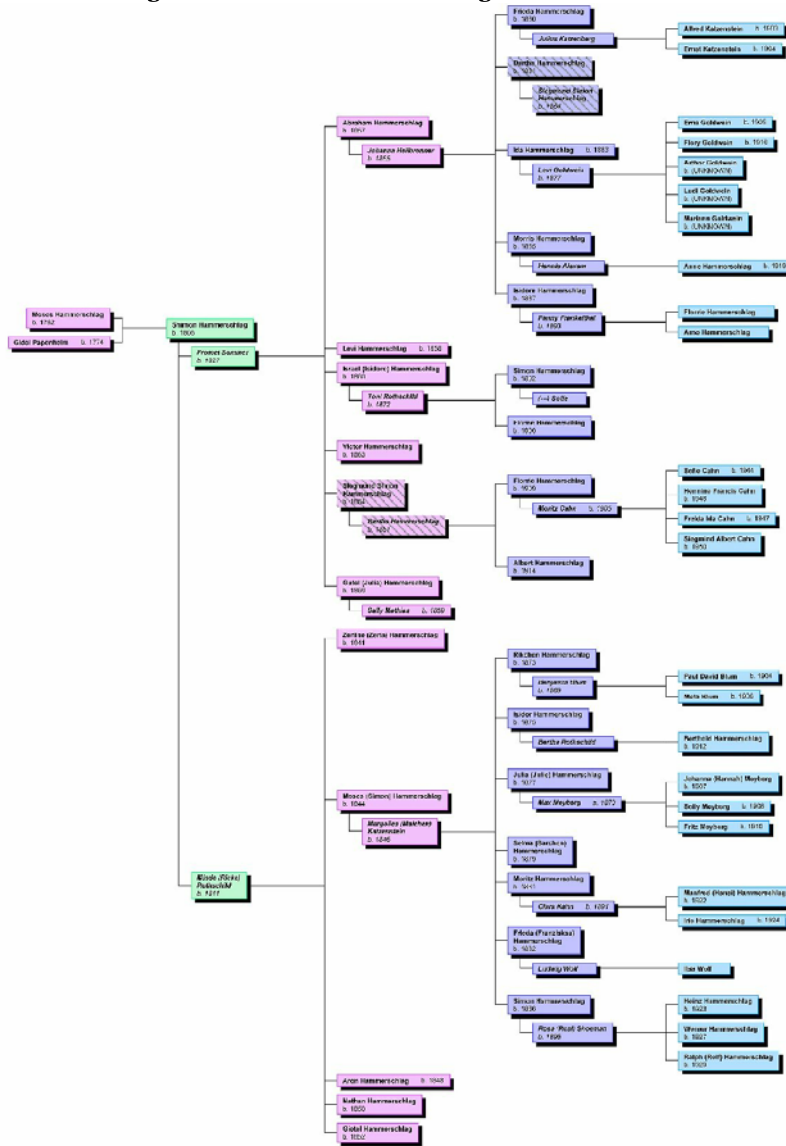
Rikchen Hammerschlag (1873 - 1937).

Ruth's paternal grandmother.

Rikchen was born in Harmutsachsen in 1873. She married Benjamin Blum around 1903. Benjamin was a widower with a young son. The marriage would have been an arranged one. There were a number of other instances of marriage between members of the Hammerschlag, Blum and also Plaut families. We can safely assume that the families were well acquainted. Rikchen became the step-mother of Theo, Benjamin's son from his first marriage. They had two further children, Paul David, who was born in November 1904 and Meta, born in July, 1906. She lived in Harmutsachsen all of her life. In 1936, during the height of the Nazi oppression, she was to see her son Paul emigrate to South Africa, soon followed by her daughter Meta. She survived her husband by 8 years, and died in 1937, aged 64. She is buried next to her husband in Frielendorf.

Rikchen had 3 brothers and three sisters. One sister (Selma) died aged 10, and her sister Frieda was murdered in Riga during the holocaust. Her third sister Julia and her brothers Simon, Isidor and Moritz all emigrated to South Africa. One of Julia's daughters (Johanna/Hanna Meyberg) remained in Germany and was murdered in the Holocaust.

Ancestors, Descendants and Siblings of Rikchen Hammerschlag



**The siblings of Rickshen Hammerschlag
Ruth's Uncles, aunts and Cousins**

Four of Rickchen's siblings emigrated to South Africa, with their families. These were Paul David Blum's uncles, aunts and cousins. The first to arrive in South Africa was Isidor, whose son Berthold was born in Roodepoort (near Johannesburg) in 1912. He was joined there by Moritz, who arrived between 1920 and 1922. Simon left Germany in 1929 and settled in Johannesburg. I do not know when Julia emigrated to South Africa. As her eldest child Johanna died in 1942 in the Holocaust, aged 35, we can assume that Julia would not have left before Johanna was an adult, so possibly not before 1930. As each family unit arrived in South Africa, they were able to encourage and sponsor their siblings and assist them in emigrating from Germany to South Africa.

The difficulties and expense of emigration.

German Jews had to overcome many internal and external obstacles if they wished to emigrate. Nazi measures such as the 'flight tax' and restrictions on transporting Jewish property thwarted most Jewish attempts to leave Germany. *Aryanization* – the complete takeover of Jewish assets – was by and large the main internal barrier Jews faced. This slow process had eventually depleted the savings of most Jews, and without the means to pay for the high costs of emigration they were unable to leave. The German authorities restricted how much money could be transferred abroad. Most German Jews who managed to emigrate were completely impoverished by the time they were able to leave. The material costs of emigrating were considerable. Many Jewish men had lost their jobs and businesses after 1933 and the massive tax levied on assets leaving the country threatened to obliterate what little savings Jews might have left. Jewish property was also sold at ever

shrinking prices due to accelerating pace of Aryanization. In addition to all of this, Jewish families had to deal with the arbitrary exchange rate offered by the Reichsbank. By 1936 emigrants could exchange their marks at only thirty per cent of their normal value. Additionally there were the external barriers, imposed by the various countries receiving German Jewish refugees. In the early 1930s, with much of the world suffering economic depression, many nations used legal and administrative barriers to restrict Jewish emigration. German Jews wishing to flee had no-where to go. By 1935 most Western countries were actively restricting Jewish refugee flow.

In South Africa, under a rising tide of Afrikaner Nationalism, the Nationalist Party had won the 1929 general election, and introduced the "Quota Act of 1930" with the specific intention of restricting Jewish immigration; restricted immigrants were not specifically racially defined, but rather by country of origin. The list of restricted Eastern European countries contained all of those that had large Jewish populations, including Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. Immigration from each of those countries was restricted to a maximum of fifty persons per year. In wishing to encourage Aryan immigration the act included a schedule of countries from which immigrants were given unlimited immigration rights. The list included the British Commonwealth, and most Scandinavian and Western European countries and (crucially) also Germany. Thus there existed an opportunity for German Jews to enter South Africa, and between 1933 and 1936 some 3,600 German Jews did so Bowing to Afrikaner anti-Jewish sentiment, from the "Purified National Party" Parliament had expanded the rules of the Quota Act to require that each immigrant would not only require a passport,

but also to be in possession of £100 in cash (equivalent to £5000 in 2012). Further appeasement followed when the ruling United Party introduced an Aliens Act in 1937, designed to restrict Jewish immigration from Germany. *(The Act failed to appease the Purified Nationalists. They focused increasingly on the Jew as an explanation for the Afrikaners' misfortunes, whilst South African Jewry fully supported South Africa's entry into World War II. More than 10% of the entire Jewish population served in the Union Defence Force and other Allied forces. During the war South African Jewry had to contend with a powerful anti-Semitic mood orchestrated by the paramilitary Ossewa-Brandwag organisation and the pro-Nazi New Order founded in 1940).*

The Hammerschlag's who were already in South Africa were able to advise and assist family members still in living Germany to flee from to South Africa. We know from Ruth's father that it was thanks to the

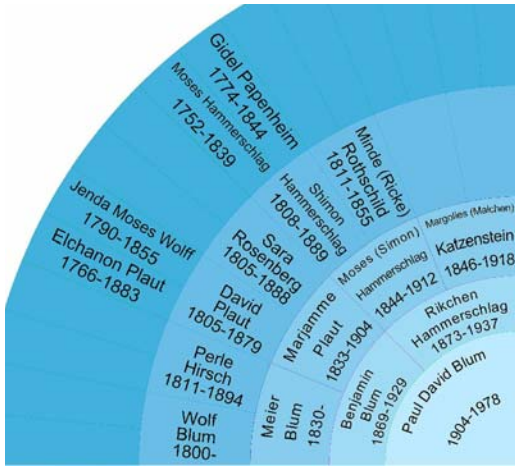
financial assistance of his Uncle Moritz, who was then living in Florida, South Africa, that he and his wife-to-be (Grete Goldschmidt) were able to come to South Africa. There is a notation in Paul's passport, dated 25th May 1936, that he had acquired £4.16/-, equal to 59.50 Reichsmark as foreign currency. One can but imagine the anxious times they would have known while corresponding with regard to the cash needed on arrival, whilst at the same time satisfying the requirements of the German authorities.

Similarly, the combined passport of Jakob and Jettchen Goldschmidt, shows that they had foreign currency of £1.14/-, which they would have received from Paul and Grete, thereby enabling them to leave Germany. Little could they have known that these were life-saving events.

All but one of the Hammerschlag family members remaining behind in Germany were murdered in the Holocaust.



Paul David Blum
Ruth's father



Paul was born in Frielendorf on 24th November, 1904. He had an elder half-brother Theo, and a sister Meta, who was born when he was almost eight years old. The family lived at 12 Witze Street. He attended the Jewish school in Frielendorf, and had his bar mitzvah in the Frielendorf shul.

He would have known his wife to be, Grete Goldschmidt from an early age. She arrived in Frielendorf in 1914, aged two. She was almost the same age as Paul's sister Meta, and they were in the same class at school. In this small town the families most certainly knew each other, even though he was eight years older than Grete. We are not aware of the details of how their relationship grew, but they were certainly betrothed before they left Germany in 1936.

Paul, like his father and grand-father before him, was a horse dealer and joined the family business. Their business, including stables would have been located on the premises as their house. He lived at home until he left Germany.

In 1936 Paul emigrated to South Africa. He left Germany via Switzerland, and sailed from Genoa on the 28th May, 1936. He arrived in the Union of South Africa on June 13th, 1936, as a passenger on board the Giulio Cesare. His arrival documents described him as a farmer from Germany, sponsored by M. Hammerschlag of P.O. Box 26, Florida. Grete joined Paul in South Africa three months later, with her parents following in 1939. Although both their German passports and travel documents state that they were married in Germany, this appears to have been a civil ceremony to ease their emigration. They did not live together initially; after her arrival in South Africa Grete was living in Florida, employed as a housekeeper, and Paul was living in Johannesburg.

They were married in a civil ceremony in Johannesburg on Friday 3 December 1937, and in a Jewish ceremony on Sunday 5th December 1937. Their wedding reception was held at the home of Paul's aunt Rosa Hammerschlag (born Shoeman).



Clockwise, from top left.

Paul in Frielendorf.

Paul on horseback.

Paul and Meta.

Paul, with a horse. All of these photographs outside their house at No. 28 Witze Strasse in Frielendorf.

Paul and Grete. Photograph taken in Kassel, shortly before Paul left Germany in 1936.



At the outbreak of WWII they were required to register as Aliens. This necessitated the carrying of an alien's registration certificate. They were not allowed to leave Johannesburg unless they first obtained permission to do so. This was war-time, South Africa was at war with Germany, and they spoke with German accents. To all but the Jews that knew them, they were regarded as Germans; we can only imagine how difficult it must have been for them. They had fled the Holocaust, they had lost contact with their relatives still in Germany, and were well aware of the dangers that face their family; yet they were now regarded as being the German enemy themselves. Their alien registration certificates do however provide us with a clear picture of their work, residences and holidays.

By 1939 Paul was employed as a barman at the Gladstone Hotel in Commissioner Street Johannesburg, where he was to acquire the skills that were the foundation for what was to be his lifelong career as a successful hotelier. Grete was working as a housekeeper for a Mr Leo David, of 11 Glenton Court, Bellevue, Johannesburg. She was living at the Gladstone with Paul. In 1940 she went to work as a shop assistant at Hub Stores in Rockey Street, Observatory.

As a term of endearment Paul and Grete called each other Bobbie. Friends and strangers in South Africa, possibly having difficulty with the unusual German name of Grete, all called her Bobbie too. And so she was to be known for the rest of her life.

In April 1944 Paul was recruited by my grandfather Herman Bernitz to become the assistant Manager of the Carlton Hotel in Witbank. My uncle Ernie, then a teenager recalls: "I first met Ruth's parents, Paul & Bobbie at the hotel.

The Carlton was the hub of the business and social scene, amongst the then mainly Welsh and Scottish coal mining community. The Bar trade was the back-

bone of the business, and was totally run on credit, (bar cards which were paid at month's end). Mom and Dad (Herman and Kate) were so busy trying to run the business, that they needed a bookkeeper and someone in the office. I don't know if Dad advertised, but Max Frenkel (who's brother Alfred was later to marry Paul's sister Meta) arrived, and took over all the office and bookkeeping functions.

The expanding business needed more staff, and Frenkel recommended the Blums who were at the time working at the Gladstone Hotel in Johannesburg. Paul took over the bar and kitchen whilst Bobbie helped Paul with the kitchen and Frenkel in the office. They were experienced, and did not need any coaching; they proved to be popular and polite. They spoke English well (with an accent). Max then married Irma, who was appointed as a housekeeper (the hotel by then had 76 rooms and was always fully booked)".

Ruth was born in 1945, in Johannesburg. On 10th September 1945 Bobbie had received permission to proceed to Johannesburg for three months for medical attention. Ruth was born on the 25th October 1945, and Jettchen was presumably with Grete for the birth. Paul was granted permission by the authorities to travel to Johannesburg on the 25th October, and returned to Witbank after 4 days. Bobbie and Ruth were to join him a month later. Bobbie and my own mother (Pearl Bernitz) each with a baby, become firm friends – and (eventually) so did Ruth and I!

After Herman died the Carlton Hotel was sold. In August 1950 Paul, Bobbie and Ruth moved to Germiston to manage the Alexandra hotel for its owner, a Mr L. Shatz.. Ruth became a boarder at the Dominican Convent of St. Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic Girls School in Witbank. Paul and Bobbie became naturalised South African citizens at the end of 1948. In January 1960 the Bernitz family once again acquired the Carlton Hotel, and Paul and Bobbie returned Witbank to manage it. With Ruth now a boarder at the Witbank Convent School, it was a



fortuitous opportunity for all parties. The Hotel looms large in our family life, not simply because of the ownership by Herman and his family, but equally because in each of the periods of ownership and management the Blum and Bernitz families, were very involved with each other, as employers and employees (our parents), as firm, later lifelong friends (Ruth, and my sisters Jill and Shana) and eventually as teenage boy- and girl-friend, still happily married over 45 years on. It was a place which considerably influenced both my and Ruth's early lives. In February 1964 the Blum's were again employed by Leon Shatz, this time managing his Caledonian Hotel in Germiston, where they were to remain until their retirement.

As was the case with the Carlton, the Caledonian was renowned throughout the surrounding areas for the quality of Bobbie and Paul's restaurants (she front of house, he in the Kitchen.) Early booking for a weekend was essential, and the Xmas and New Year dinners required reservations months in advance.

The Blums remained at the Caledonian Hotel until their retirement after Ruth and I had emigrated in 1976. They had never lived in a house of their own. Home had always been a suite (no kitchen) within the hotel. Bobbie had not run a conventional household, and did not cook for the family. And so they retired to a residential hotel in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Paul and Grete had arrived in South Africa as penniless refugees, and had worked seven days a week, day and night, all of their lives. They took one annual holiday a year, taking Ruth for a two week holiday to Durban each year. In 1962 they went back to Europe and Germany for their first and only visit. They hated their return to Germany, and vowed never to go back again. Paul was to visit us once in London before he died. A non-working retirement was not even considered. Paul worked as a barman (as he had done when he first arrived in South Africa) at a nearby hotel, whilst Bobbie went to work as a sales lady in a dress shop. Paul worked until his sudden passing from pneumonia in 1978, aged 74. Bobbie continued to live at the hotel, and worked until shortly before she passed away in 1993. Paul and Bobbie are buried in the Westpark Cemetery, Johannesburg

This page, left to right.
 Top row:
 Bobbie, Ruth aged 17 months, and Paul
 in 1947.
 Paul and Bobbie.



Middle row:
 Ruth, late 1950's, in Durban with Paul
 and Bobbie.
 Ruth, a flower girl at a Hammerschlag
 wedding, together with Paul and Bobbie.



Bottom:
 Ruth, early 1950's, in Durban with Paul
 and Bobbie.
 Ruth.



Next Page.
 Top; The wedding of Meta Blum to
 Alfred Frenkel, 1941. Grete and Paul are
 2nd and 3rd from left.

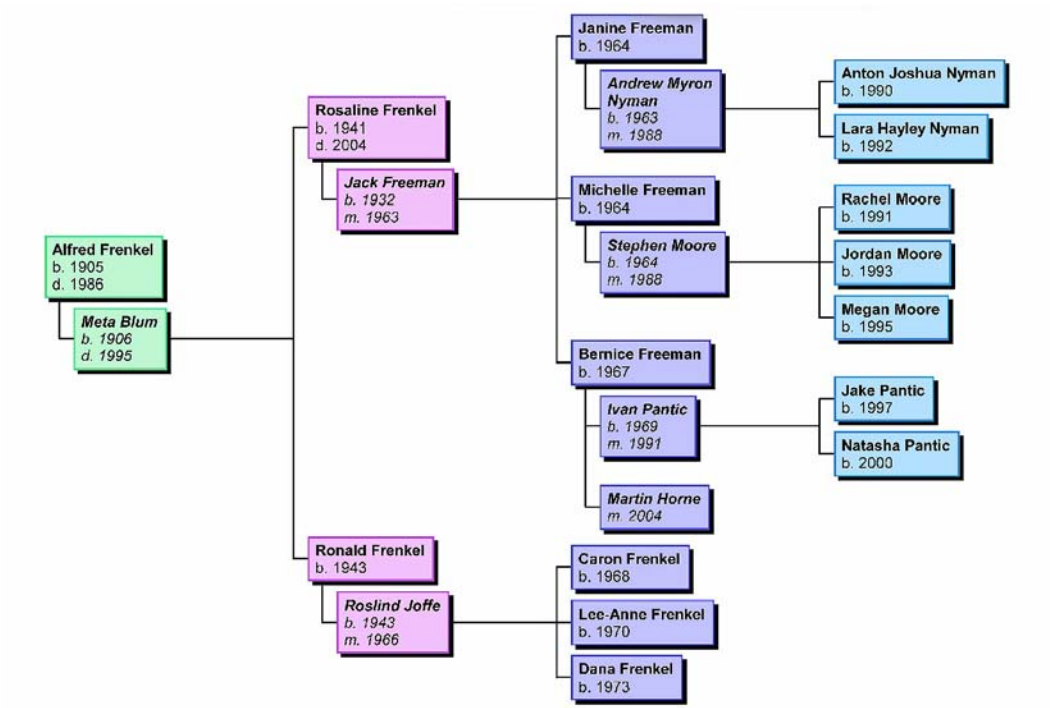
Bottom: Outside the Caledonian Hotel,
 Germiston, about 1970. .
 L. to R. Resha Goldschmidt (Bobbie's
 sister in-law), Meta, Charles, Paul,
 Rosalind Frenkel (daughter-in-law of
 Meta), Bobbie, Ruth.



Meta Blum and Alfred Frenkel
Ruth's Aunt and Uncle

Paul's sister Meta sister fled to South Africa in 1939. She married Alfred Frenkel in Johannesburg. Their daughter Rosaline was born in 1941 and their son

Ronald was born in 1943. German records show that she was permitted to emigrate in 1939, and that the authorities auctioned her household goods in 1941.

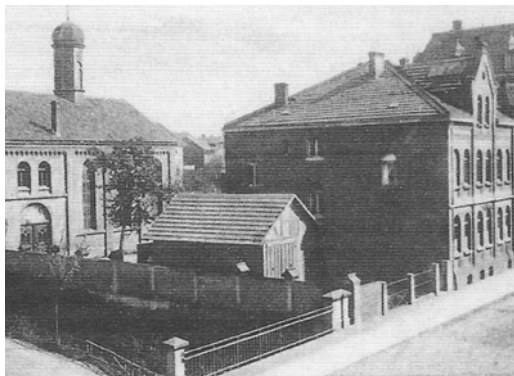


The Goldschmidt Family of Hersfeld

The Goldschmidt's of HERSFELD

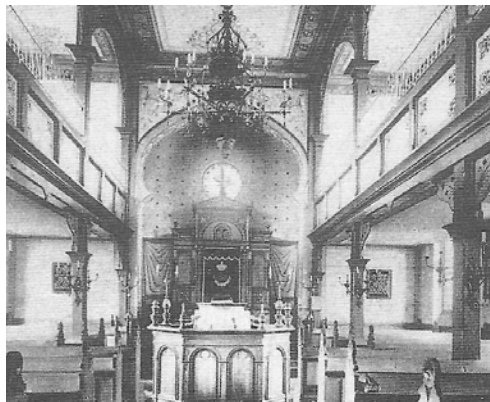
Ruth's mother Grete Goldschmidt was born in Hersfeld, Germany on October 3rd 1912, the youngest child of Jakob Goldschmidt (1868-1948) and Jetchen Plaut (1874-1952). Grete had an older sister Rosel, born in 1900 and a brother, Willie, born in 1904. The family moved from Hersfeld to Frielendorf in 1914. Today the town is known as the spa town of Bad Hersfeld, located in North Eastern Hesse, Germany, roughly 50 km southeast of Kassel. The first Jews settled in Hersfeld in 1349. (The last were deported in 1942). A shul is documented as early as 1355. Life was not easy for the early Jews - there was a pogrom in 1349, with the Jews being accused of causing the Black Death by poisoning the wells. By the 1600s all the Jews had been driven out. When in 1866 all the Jews of Germany were granted equal status, many started to return to Hersfeld from the surrounding "Jewish villages". Included were the Goldschmidts from Ra-

boldhausen and Muhlbach. The Jewish population



The Shul, school and burial house in Hersfeld

grew rapidly; they earned their living from businesses such as horse and cattle sales, antique sales, butchers, retail shops, a goldsmith (Goldschmiedt in German), and a paint shop. The Jewish population had grown steadily from 76 Jews in 1871 to 300 by 1905. Of the 34 registered Jewish taxpayers in 1894, nine were



The interior of the shul in Hersfeld.

members of the Goldschmidt family. From 1877 shul services were held in a rented house in Hersfeld, previously occupied by Hirsch Plaut. A list of the founding shul members includes Hirsch and Juda Plaut and the widow Goldschmidt. They were the highest taxpayers on the list and were therefore presumably relatively wealthy. By the early 1900's there was a shul, a school, a mikvah and a tahara (burial) house. Hersfeld had a kosher restaurant and hotel and a kosher butcher (Oscar Goldschmidt). There was also a Jewish cemetery, in which only 38 gravestones remain today.

Jews were subject to conscription into the German military. During the Franco-German War of 1870-1871, Jeisel Goldschmidt was awarded the Iron Cross, second class during a military engagement at which Napoleon III was captured with his whole army. In spite of growing anti-Semitism in Germany and in Hersfeld, Jews were also subject to conscription during WWI. Twelve thousand Jewish Servicemen died in the war. Amongst them were eighty three Goldschmidt's, including four from Hersfeld (Max, Fritz, Hermann and Josef Goldschmidt). Their names are inscribed on the War memorial in Hersfeld.

**Isaak Goldschmidt, born 1849.
Ruth's maternal great-grandfather**

I have not been able to locate any records regarding Isaak's wife. However we do know that Isaak had two sons - Jacob (Ruth's grandfather), and Joseph (Ruth's grand-uncle), who died in Hersfeld in 1932.

At the time that Jacob and Joseph were growing up in Hersfeld, they were part of the extended Goldschmidt family, which had played a prominent part in the commercial and community affairs of the town. Their numbers included Louis Goldschmidt, his Sara (born Schwarz), and their children) Jacob (born 1886), Fritz (1888), Frieda (1897) and Malli (1900).

Photo right. The "Modehaus" of Joseph Goldschmidt located at Breitenstrasse 11 in Hersfeld. Joseph was married to Meta Plaut. They had two sons, Bernhard and Max, and two daughters, Karola and Gertrud.

Photo below Left: An advertisement in the magazine "The Israelite" of 23 March 1891: "Kosher Mustard for sale - under the supervision the teacher Mr Nussbaum. Mr Louis Goldschmidt of Hersfeld manufactures and sells fine kosher table mustard. Certified by the provincial Rabbi Dr. Kahn of Fulda. Milled by Schönfeld & Röber of Hersfeld. I offer fine kosher table mustard in pots 10-100 pounds and in glasses at 40 pfennigs a pound. Reseller discounts available! **Louis Goldschmidt, Hersfeld.**

Below right:
An advertisement in "The Israelite" of 3 March 1897:
Kosher - Oscar Goldschmidt of Hersfeld.
The district Rabbi of Fulda Kosher recommends these quality products in 5-pound packages:
Bratwurst at 40 pfennig per pound, liverwurst at 60 pf. per pound. Pressed sausage at 80 pf. Wiener ducks - 20 pf. per pair, goose legs - 80 pf., salami 1.20 pf. per pound. Mettwurst per (smoked sausage) 1.20 Pf., smoked tongues 3.00 pfennig each, - Detailed price list available free.
Oscar Goldschmidt, Hersfeld.

There were a number of Goldschmidt businesses in Hersfeld including those of Honas and David (livestock dealers), Joseph, Sally (Manufacturer), Sigmund (clothing store), Sussman and Simon (textiles).

By 1894 the list had grown substantially. It included: .Jakob F Goldschmidt (Ruth's grandfather) – Cattle dealer, Honas Goldschmidt (Horse dealer), Joshua Goldschmidt ("Privatier" – man of independent means), Samuel (i) Goldschmidt (commerce), Samuel (ii) Goldschmidt, Sussman Goldschmidt (buyer) and his wife, Louis Goldschmidt (buyer), Sigmund Goldschmidt (buyer).



Senf בשר

Unter Aufsicht des Herrn Lehrer Nussbaum zu Hersfeld hergestellt mit prima
"צ"ץ Tafel-Senf und haben wir den Verkauf des feinen Herrn Louis Goldschmidt,
Hersfeld, übertragen.
Achtung! Die Geschäftsleute der Provinzial-Rabbiner Dr. Kahn zu Fulda und
Herr Lehrer Nussbaum zu Hersfeld.
Kaufmannshaus bei Hersfeld.

Schönfeld & Röber.

Bezugsadresse auf alle Waren anderer Art prima "צ"ץ Tafel-Senf in Rollen
von 10 bis 100 Pf. und in Gläsern à 40, 60 Pf. (1942)

Wiederverkauferrabatt!
Louis Goldschmidt, Hersfeld.

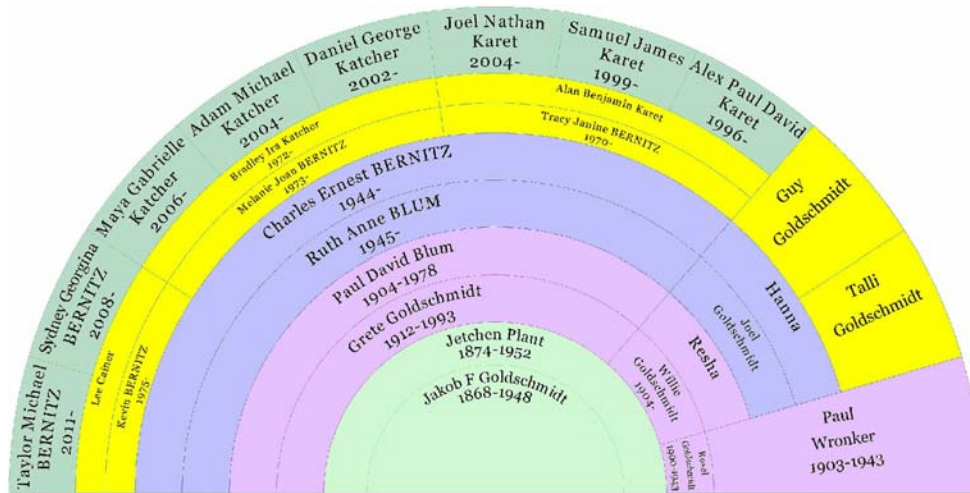
בשר Oscar Goldschmidt, Hersfeld, בשר

Bezirksrabbinat Fulda,
empfiehlt in Ia. Qualität franco in 5 Pfund-Packten:
pr. Pfd. - 40 Pfg. | Gänseleber 80 Pfg.
Bratwurst 60 " | Salami pr. Pfd. 1.30 "
Leberwurst 80 " | Pfefferwurst 1.20 "
Wiener Gans 20 " | Rauchspeck 3.00 "

Ausführlicher Preisencourant gratis und franco.
Oscar Goldschmidt, Hersfeld.

1381)

**Jakob Goldschmidt (1868-1948) and Jettchen Plaut (1874-1952).
Ruth's maternal grandparents.**



Jakob was born in Muhlbach in 1868. By 1871 his family had moved to Hersfeld. He married Jettchen Plaut (from Frielendorf). He was, as was his father, a horse dealer. Jakob and Jettchen had three children - Rosel (1900), Willie (1904) and Ruth's mother Grete (1912), all born in Hersfeld. In 1914 they moved to Frielendorf. After the events of Kristallnacht, Jakob and Jettchen left Frielendorf and moved for a short time to Frankfurt, where they lived at the home of the Moses family in Sandweg 47. They obtained their passports from the Nazi authorities in March 1939, and were able to leave Germany without any possessions. They had left a number of boxes for safekeeping. These were never returned to them. They sailed from Hamburg on the 21st April 1939, and arrived in Cape Town on the 8th of May. Jakob was 71, and Jettchen who was 65 was practically blind. Jakob and Jettchen were supported by Paul and Grete for the remainder of their lives. They were living initially at 41 Saratoga Avenue in Doornfontein in Johannesburg, but in November 1947 they went to Live at our Parents Home, a Jewish aged home, then predominantly used by the German Jewish Community. Ruth has early recollections of visiting them there.



Above: Grete, Jakob, Jettchen, and Paul at our Parents home in Johannesburg, 1947/48

Jakob died on 12 June 1948. Jettchen outlived him by four and a half years, passing away in December 1952. They are buried in West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg (Jakob C501 and Jettchen B449).

Hersfeld



Above: A picture of Markplatz (Market Square) in Hersfeld around 1910. No 30 was the house in which the Goldschmidt's were living when the pictures were taken. Hersfeld at the time had a population of around twelve thousand.



Left: The ruins of the Hersfeld shul, built in 1831, after Kristallnacht, 8 November 1938



Above: The house in Hersfeld in which the Goldschmidt family rented accommodation. The owner of the house was a painter by the name of Georg Carl Apel, whose premises occupied half of the ground floor, the other half being occupied by a hairdressing salon. The two gentlemen standing in front of the building are the hairdresser (far left) and Georg Apel. The picture is believed to have been taken around 1912/13. The others in the picture are all occupants of the house.

Right: Detail from the main picture. .
The girl to the left of the baby carriage is Rosel Goldschmidt, and it is probable that the child in the carriage is Grete Goldschmidt. At the time the picture was taken Grete was just a few months old. The lady in the third floor window appears to be Jettchen Goldschmidt, their mother.

Rosel Goldschmidt (1900-1943)
Ruth's aunt.



The only photograph we have of Rosel, who was murdered by the Nazis at Sobibor. The picture was sent by her husband Paul Wronker to her parents in South Africa. A note hand-written in German on the back reads "To my beloved Mother (in-law) – your beautiful young daughter, really shy! Photo by P. Wronker October 1939." Even from this old black and white photograph she appears to have the same beautiful, piercing blue eyes that Grete, Ruth and our grandchildren have in common.

Rosel was born in Hersfeld in 1900. The family moved to Frielendorf in 1914. After Kristallnacht, she left Frielendorf as an unmarried adult and moved to one of the large cities (possibly Frankfurt). Unlike her siblings, she did not emigrate to another continent, but moved to Amsterdam in April 1936. She was registered as living in apartment II at Michelangelostraat 59. She was employed as a domestic help by the parents of Anne Frank, at the Frank home in the Merwedeplein, from April 1936 to October 1937. Rosel, and her future husband are mentioned on a number of occasions in Anne Frank's diaries.

"On Friday, June 12th, I woke up at six o'clock, and no wonder; it was my birthday. . . (A gift from) Mr. Wronker a box of Droste and a game; (also from) Mr. Wronker flowers as well and so I was thoroughly spoiled. Anne Frank refers to these people and their probable fates . . . in her diary. "Rosel and Wronker have been sent to Poland".

In May 1940, Germany invaded and occupied the Netherlands. The Dutch civilian administration continued to function, under German control, but Queen Wilhelmina and her government fled to Great Britain. German policy in the Netherlands actively promoted anti-Jewish measures and insisted on strict compliance with them. Between 1940 and 1942, anti-Jewish laws and ordinances restricted the civil rights of Jews, confiscated their property and businesses, and banned them from certain professions. Jews were isolated and were forced to wear a yellow star on their clothing. In January 1941, all Jews were ordered to report for registration. German authorities then required all Dutch Jews to move to the Jewish ghetto in Amsterdam.

On the 22nd July 1942 Rosel married Paul Wronker in Amsterdam. We know little about Paul. He had been a frequent visitor to the Anne Frank household, and had been a lodger there for a while. It was possibly there that Paul and Rosel had met.

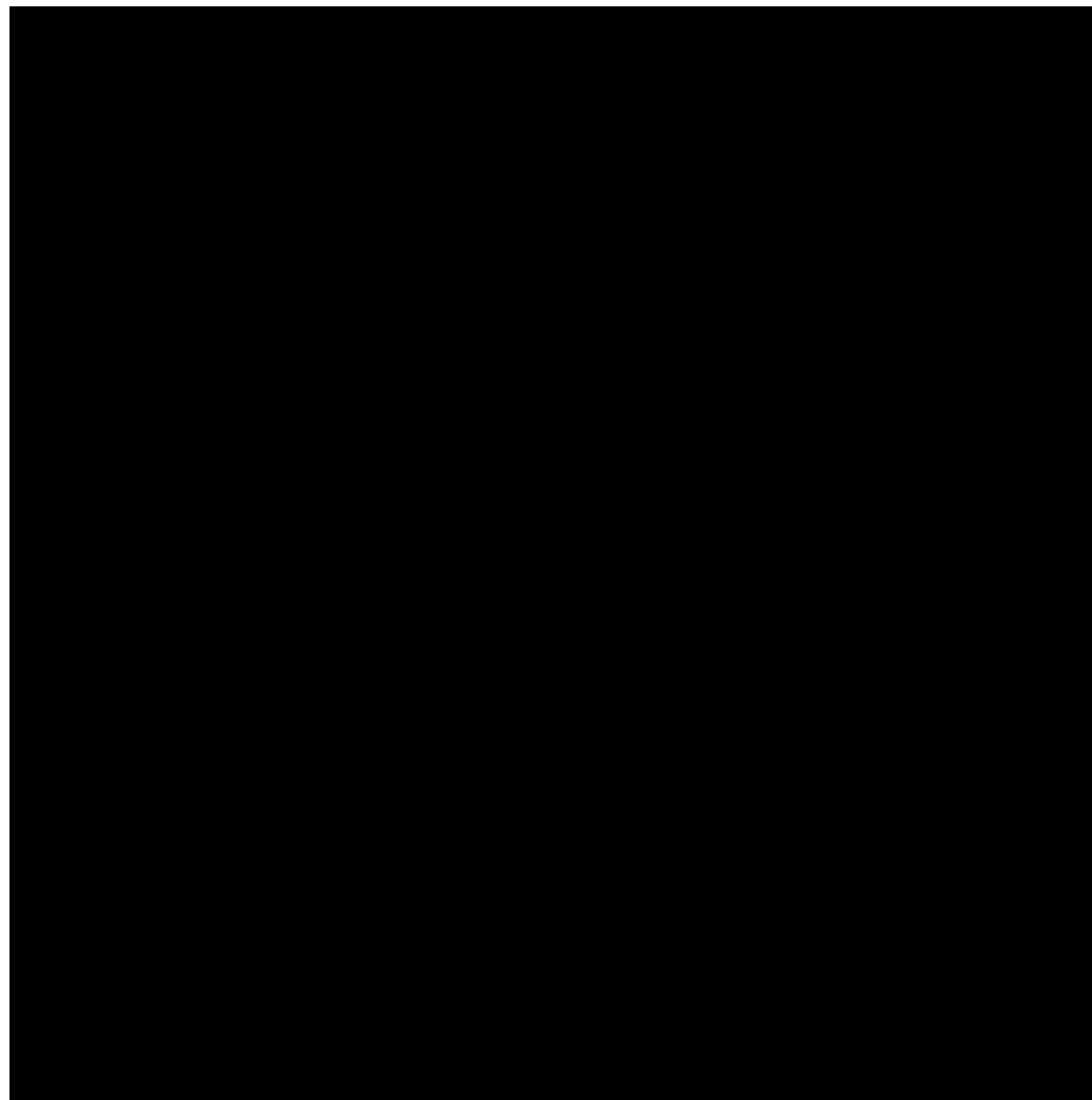


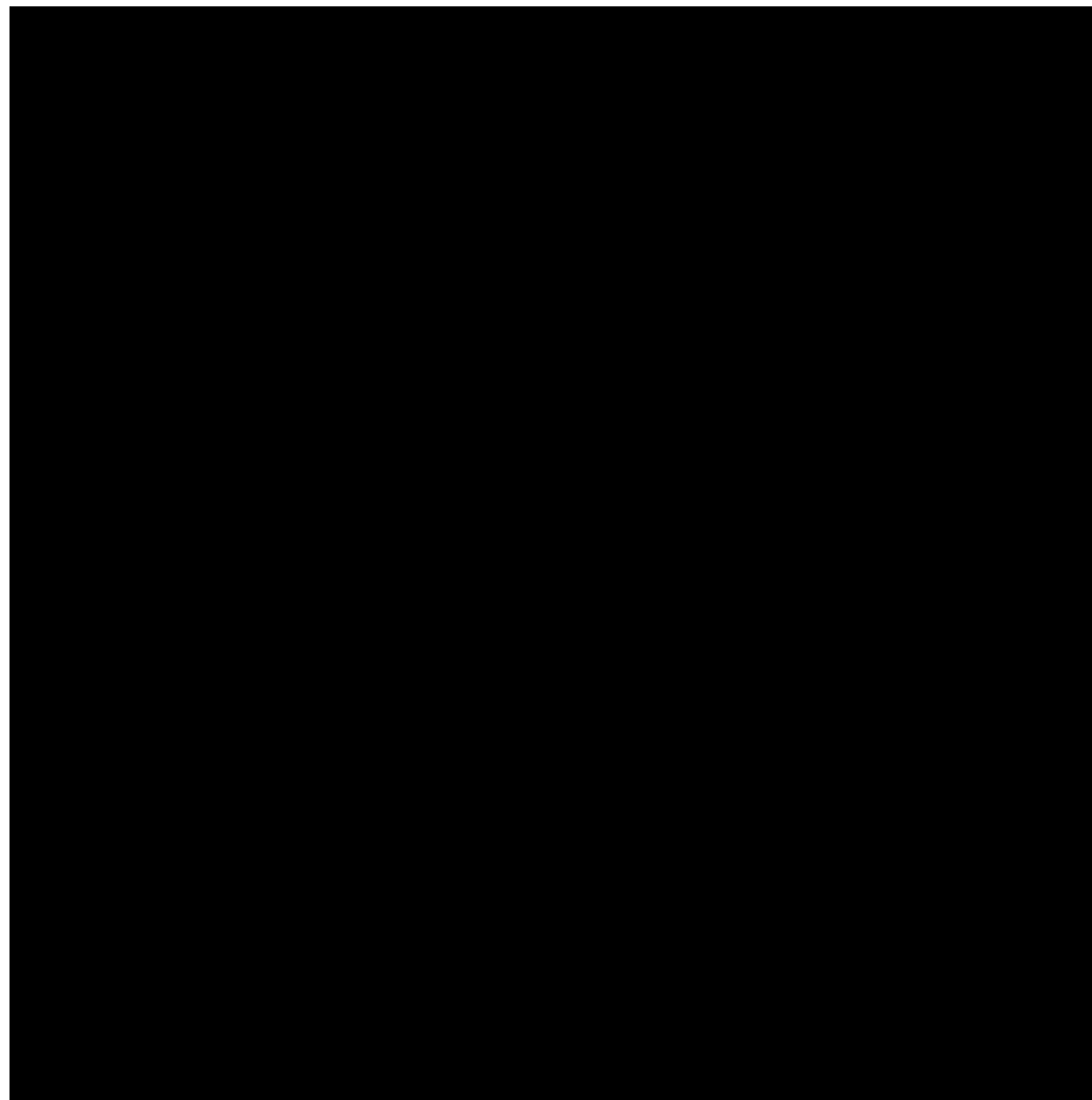
Above: Members of the Jewish community at the entrance to the Amsterdam ghetto. The sign reads "Only Jews are allowed to enter".

Paul was born in Lissa, near Posen on 16 December 1903, the son of Moritz Wronker and Bianka Bergman. Paul had moved from Berlin to Amsterdam in September 1935. In her diary Anne Frank describes him as a kind, rather fat man with glasses. After their wedding Paul and Rosel were living at No. 74 Amstellaan, in the Jewish Ghetto. Paul had been working as a manager in an office equipment factory. In late June 1942, the German authorities had announced that Jews would be deported to labour camps in Germany. In reality, they were concentrated in the Vught and Westerbork transit camps. They remained there only a short time before they were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibor killing centres in occupied Poland. Dutch police guarded Westerbork, where conditions were relatively good in comparison to transit camps elsewhere in

Western Europe. The Dutch provided the camp with supplies, and the prisoners had adequate food, clothing, housing, and sanitary facilities. Nonetheless, the barracks were extremely crowded, and prisoners lived in constant fear of weekly deportations to killing centres. In little more than two years, more than 100,000 Jews were deported from the Netherlands; only 5,200 survived.

They had initially been spared from being deported due to Paul's occupation – he was working as a nurse in a hospice. However on the 25 May 1943 Paul and Rosel were transported to Vught, and then from there to Westerbork on the 2 July 1943. On 13 July 1943 they were deported to Sobibor, and were murdered on arrival there on 16 July 1943. Rosel was 43. Paul was 39.

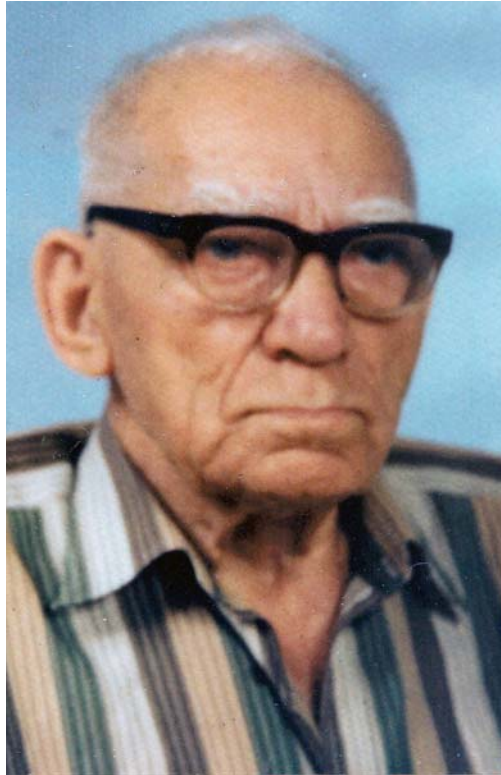




Ze'ev (Willie) Goldschmidt
Ruth's Uncle

Willy was born in Hersfeld on 14 Jan 1904. From 1914 he completed his education in Frielendorf and had his bar mitzvah in the Frielendorf shul.

Unfortunately we know little of his life and circumstances. He emigrated to Israel, and settled in Peach Tikva. He was married to Resha, and they had one son named Joel. Joel served for many years in the Israeli defence Force. He married Chana, and they had 3 children. Paul and Bobbie visited them in Israel in 1962, and they visited South Africa around 1970. We visited them on a few occasions during trips to Israel.



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The Ancestors of
RUTH ANNE BERNITZ (born Blum)

