

A TRIBUTE

THE OBERMAYER GERMAN JEWISH HISTORY AWARDS

PRESENTED TO

GÜNTER BOLL

OLAF DITZEL

MONICA KINGREEN

JOSEF MOTSCHMANN

HEINRICH SCHREINER

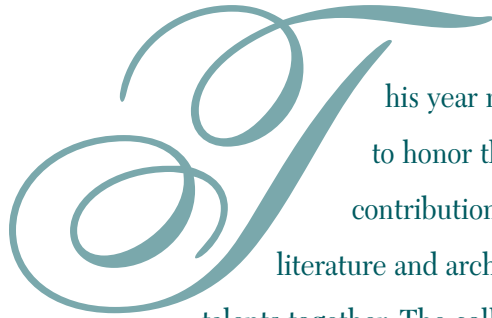
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OBERMAYER GERMAN JEWISH HISTORY AWARDS

A WORTHY TRADITION



This year marks the second annual presentation of awards that were created to honor the past and enrich the future. German life was once filled with contributions made by Jewish scholars, writers and artists. Music, science, literature and architecture were often collaborative efforts that brought diverse talents together. The collective history of Germans and Jews was profoundly connected and served to benefit the world. The Nazi regime and its obliteration of the German Jewish community ended a long period of collaboration and mutual trust.

However, many German citizens, ranging from academics to those working in business and professions, did not let go of their interest and commitment to Jewish history and culture. Many worked at great personal cost to preserve and reconstruct aspects of Jewish life, which had contributed to the cultural richness of their lives and the lives of their respective communities. These individuals have researched, reconstructed, written and rebuilt an appreciation of Jewish culture that will enrich life today and in the future.

In many cases, diverse individuals, without thought of reward, have helped raise awareness about a once vibrant community. Their ongoing efforts pay tribute to the importance of Jewish subject matter and its value to German society as a whole.

Many volunteers have devoted years of effort to such projects, but few have been recognized or honored for their efforts. The German Jewish Community History Council and its cosponsors believe it is particularly important for Jews from other parts of the world to be aware of this ongoing work. By establishing the annual Obermayer German Jewish History Awards, the Jewish community worldwide can acknowledge German citizens who have rekindled the spark of Jewish thought that once existed in Germany. The award winners have dedicated themselves to rebuilding destroyed institutions and ideals. Their achievements reflect a personal connection to Jewish history and a willingness to repair a small corner of the world.



HONORING THE WINNERS

The Obermayer German Jewish History Awards were established to pay tribute to Germans who have made significant voluntary contributions to preserving the Jewish history, culture, and material remains in their local communities. A large number of outstanding nominations for the awards were received from throughout the world, especially from Jews who had a keen appreciation for the dedication and contributions of these German citizens. The jury, composed of individuals with broad familiarity with these types of activities and projects in Germany, selected the five prize winners. The awards are presented on Sunday, January 27, 2002, the German Holocaust Memorial Day, at the Abgeordnetenhaus, which houses the Berlin Parliament.

GÜNTER BOLL

STEINENSTADT, GERMANY

*Nominated by Daniel Teichman-Levy, Zurich, Switzerland,
Raymond M. Jung, Zurich, Switzerland
and Professor Freddy Raphael, Strasbourg, France*

The work of Günter Boll has had a major impact in three countries. His research about the Jewish communities of Baden, Germany, Alsace, France and northern Switzerland has been of enormous value to Alsatian Jews and their descendants who currently reside in the far corners of the world. Because he shared his knowledge so willingly, family histories have been reconstructed and passed on to the next generation.

Günter Boll was born in Freiburg on August 5, 1940. Trained as a schoolteacher with a strong background in history, he developed a great interest in the Jewish communities that once flourished in the upper Rhine region. His serious, scholarly research began in earnest in 1981, when he succeeded in rescuing from a burning trash site many critical documents and objects that originally came from the Mackenheim synagogue, located in the Alsace region of France. These included 130 wimpels (ceremonial torah binders made from swaddling cloth used at the time of a brit milah) from the years 1669-1904, and vital records (birth, marriage, and death) going back to 1793.

This led to the publication of a significant book and to the exploration of grave inscriptions at a 400 year old cemetery, where until 1755 the Jews of Breisach were buried. His continued

research allowed him to record the nearly obliterated words on many 18th-century tombstones, the most noteworthy of which was the gravestone of Josef Guenzburger, founder of six Jewish municipalities in Oberbaden. His findings led to the publication of dozens of studies about Jewish life. After more than twenty years of continuous effort, Mr. Boll persuaded the French government to declare the cemetery an official historic monument.

His focus was not simply historical or passive. He demonstrated through publication his passionate desire to share his knowledge with people living on both sides of the Rhine. He wanted them to know about the history and culture of a vanished world: the Jews of the countryside.

His intense interest in Jewish history has prompted him to give tours of the Jewish cemetery, the extermination camp of Natzweiler-Struthof and its satellite camp at Urbes. When Mr. Boll finally succeeded in saving the house of the last rabbi in Breisach, he initiated the construction of a center on that site to serve as a meeting place for Christians and Jews, in order to build positive new relationships that would encourage good will among people.



OLAF DITZEL

VACHA, GERMANY

Nominated by Angelika G. Ellmann-Krueger, Berlin, Germany

Before unification the prevailing attitude in East Germany was conservative and anti-religious. Yet during a period of strict Communist rule, two dedicated individuals, Olaf Ditzel, and Günter Hermes initiated their first Jewish research project through their local historical society under the guidance of the Protestant regional director Peter Raatz. Their continuing work over many years, later with the help of Inge Wimmer, created an important link between Jewish survivors and their past.

The historical society, which Olaf Ditzel now chairs, decided to mount a major exhibit focusing on the history of the Jewish communities once thriving in Vacha, Voelkershausen and Gehaus, three small villages in Thuringia. Mr. Ditzel, a 42-year-old roofer, used his free time to interview elderly residents about their memories of former Jewish inhabitants. He conducted extensive local research and then went on to contact Jews and their descendants who originally came from the region. As a result he was able to gather a great deal of information that would serve as the basis for the exhibit and for future publications. His efforts encouraged Jewish people now living elsewhere to visit their ancestral home in order to locate information about the history of their families who fell victim to persecution and deportation.

The preservation of the Jewish cemeteries of Vacha and Gehaus was still another massive project of research and restoration. Tombstones, which had been knocked down or dislocated by the Nazis,

have been set up again. A fence has been constructed, and many tombstones have been deciphered and restored so that their descendants can visit the cemetery and find the graves of their loved ones.

Olaf Ditzel's research continues. He found a medieval mikvah or ritual bath in Vacha and after great effort got it designated as an official historic monument, which will ensure its future preservation. He has also published several important articles as part of major studies chronicling Jewish life in a region that eventually became East Germany.

The research of Olaf Ditzel and his colleagues resulted in a far more comprehensive exhibition, which is now open to students, tourists and the general public. In addition to his research and preservation efforts, both Mr. Ditzel and Mrs. Wimmer lead tours of Jewish cemeteries. He uses each tour to educate children about the need to prevent anti-Semitism and other forms of repression and bigotry.

The local historical society of Vacha continues to research Jewish history, using the talents and contributions of citizens from all over the country, who at one time resided in separate republics. This joint endeavor brings people together to study and learn about persecution and its impact. As a result, there is greater understanding among those who share a common culture, but whose history after World War II was quite different.



MONICA KINGREEN

WINDECKEN, GERMANY

Nominated by Peter and Carole-Ann Wyant, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

The books and articles written by Monica Kingreen are without equal. They serve as an inspiration to scholars from all over the world. Her original research covering thirty Jewish communities and seven hundred years of history recreates, in exquisite detail, Jewish life in an entire region.

She has initiated many new projects, which have served as a model for others and encouraged them to do further work. For example, her biography of Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, the most famous 19th-century painter of Jewish subjects, set the stage for the Frankfurt Museum to prepare a major exhibit of the painter's work, which is now touring the United States.

From early childhood Monica Kingreen had been educated by her parents about the persecution of the Jews and their horrendous fate during the Nazi era. In 1983, Mrs. Kingreen and her family moved to the small village of Windecken near Frankfurt am Main. It was this family move that inspired a life of research, coupled with her career as a school teacher.

Monica Kingreen soon learned that the very house she now lived in had been the home of Jewish families for more than 200 years. It was located next door to the former Jewish synagogue, which was burnt down on Kristallnacht. Their very street, Braugasse, had once been the Judengasse, or the main street of the Jewish community. Frau Kingreen began to research the fate of the Jewish families who had lived and prospered in

Windecken. She searched the world for those who had emigrated and for the descendants of those who had been deported. Her research eventually led to the publication of a comprehensive 650-year history of Jewish life in Windecken until its destruction under the National Socialists.

Mrs. Kingreen's interest in Jewish history quickly expanded to include the two neighboring villages of Heldenbergen and Ostheim. In 1985, Frau Kingreen was instrumental in having plaques erected commemorating the locations of the former synagogues of Windecken and Heldenbergen. In 1986, she organized an exhibition focusing on the lives of former Jewish citizens from all three villages. In 1988, she initiated the establishment of a memorial week in Windecken, Heldenbergen and Ostheim. Jewish descendants, now living throughout the world, were encouraged to return to their ancestral home. Several dozen returned and were warmly welcomed.

She became intensely involved in writing a detailed description of specific Jewish deportations from Hessen and Hanau and the fates of those deported. She published significant research on those German citizens who helped Jews to survive during the war. Her research was inspired by a heartfelt need to preserve a rich culture that had disappeared, and to pay homage to a period in history when Christians and Jews lived together in harmony.



JOSEF MOTSCHMANN

STAFFELSTEIN, GERMANY

Nominated by Marian and Albert Brown, Jr., Cincinnati, Ohio

Josef Motschmann's first home was, in many ways, responsible for the direction of his later life. Born in 1952 in Altenkunstadt, of Catholic parents and grandparents, the Motschmanns' home was on the Judenhof, part of a once-bustling Jewish neighborhood. As a curious child, Josef Motschmann soon realized that his questions about the Jews met with silence. As a questioning young adult, he decided to research the history of the Jews of Altenkunstadt and the surrounding region of Upper Franconia as a way of making a strong moral statement.

Early in his research, Mr. Motschmann discovered that the 1837 population included 400 Jews, 380 Catholics and 22 Protestants. Clearly the Jews were not a small minority but a vital segment of the community. Mr. Motschmann, a theology teacher by profession, began to lecture and publish detailed and scholarly works to document the lives of the Jews in the Upper Main Valley. In 1983 his lecture, *The Life of Suffering by Jews from the Upper Main, 1933-1945*, was published in book form. It attracted great interest and led to additional works. Among them are a history of the 1735 Horb synagogue (now reconstructed in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem), a guidebook for excursions to former Jewish communities in Bavaria, as well as a book detailing the history of these communities. In preparation for his charming 1988 book, *On the Life of the Jews in a Franconian Village*, Mr. Motschmann spent eight years studying archival material and visiting survivors, former neighbors, and employees of Jewish families from Altenkunstadt. Through his writings, Josef

Motschmann has made sure that the Jewish communities of Upper Franconia will not be forgotten.

On November 9, 1988, fives decades after Kristallnacht, the wedding stone of the simple but beautiful Baroque Altenkunstadt synagogue dating from 1726 was replaced. This was followed by a major restoration project initiated by Mr. Motschmann. The women's section houses a permanent exhibition depicting the history of the Jews in the Upper Main Valley, including important Judaica, photographs, and some of the priceless possessions owned by Jews who lost their lives in the Holocaust. Today, the synagogue is used as a meeting place where the memory of Jewish culture is kept alive. Events include lectures and art exhibits ranging from slides of Marc Chagall's work to drawings by the children of Theresienstadt, as well as a yearly memorial service marking Kristallnacht.

In 1999, along with Siegfried Rudolph, Mr. Motschmann published a book which includes extraordinary photographs of the Burgkunstadt cemetery where the Jews of the area were buried, beginning in 1620. The layout of the cemetery is graphically depicted, and all readable gravestones are listed and names are indexed. Josef Motschmann is not only responsible for the restoration of the cemetery and its upkeep, but he organizes an annual ceremony that is a particularly moving and symbolic memorial. Even though there are no Jews in the area, the event attracts hundreds of attendees who share Mr. Motschmann's commitment to commemorating an important and vital culture that once thrived in Germany.



HEINRICH SCHREINER

MAINZ, GERMANY

Nominated by Mr. Raphael Blättner, Haifa, Israel, Rabbi Leo Trepp, San Rafael, California, and Mr. Yaron Zakay, Kiryat Motzkin, Israel

Dr. Heinrich Schreiner had an impressive career in government, achieving the position of president of the Central Bank of the state of Rheinland-Pfalz by the time of his retirement. But his retirement represented the beginning of a new career in which he dedicated his time and skills to reconstructing the dilapidated synagogue of Mainz. It was the only synagogue remaining in this city which had been the leading German center of Jewish study over 1,000 years ago and throughout the Middle Ages.

Dr. Schreiner received a Ph.D. in public economy, and has always been a leader in the Catholic church, but his idealism, wide knowledge and administrative experience made him ideally suited to be president of the Förderverein Synagogue Mainz. As the head of this dedicated group, he raised the funds (about \$2 million); encouraged community leaders to participate; engaged the architects; handled the complex legal, business and political issues; and oversaw the physical restoration of the synagogue. The structure, built in 1737, was damaged in 1793 during the French siege on Mainz, was rededicated in 1819, and was vandalized during Kristallnacht but never completely burned down because of its proximity to many houses. After World War II, the site was used as a hen-coop, a lumber storage facility, and finally a dump. The decayed building was rediscovered in 1977 during the preparation of an exhibit about the Jews of Mainz. The property, which had been deeded to the city in 1987, required emergency measures to prevent the complete collapse of the building. Restoration only became a reality when Dr. Schreiner raised the

necessary funds and personally committed himself to the completion of the project.

The synagogue is in the Weisenau section of Mainz, which once had been the center of a very large and vibrant Jewish community. Formerly, Jews were forbidden to live in the center of Mainz, and settled nearby in Weisenau. The building, beautifully reconstructed in its original baroque style, was consecrated on May 27, 1996, marking the 900th anniversary of the massacre of the Jews of Mainz during the first crusade of 1096.

Under Dr. Schreiner's leadership, the synagogue and its small museum have become a center of Jewish learning for the entire community. On the Sabbath and on Jewish holy days the synagogue is used exclusively for Jewish religious services. At all other times, the synagogue is the site of frequent free lectures, concerts and exhibitions on Jewish subjects, some of which focus on the history and culture of the Mainz Jewish community. Dr. Schreiner moderates all meetings and personally guides tours through the synagogue, describing its function and its history. His current project is the restoration of two old mikvaot, or ritual baths, which were discovered just outside the synagogue. They have great historical significance and will be open to the public when they are restored.

Today the synagogue is a place of religious services for Jews, a memorial to Jewish suffering throughout the ages, and a gathering place where Jewish history and culture can be appreciated and shared by all. The work of Dr. Schreiner has made it possible for people of different faiths to engage in a positive dialogue that enhances mutual respect.



SPONSORS

GERMAN JEWISH COMMUNITY HISTORY COUNCIL. This organization operates under Obermayer Foundation, Inc., which has sponsored and directed projects in various parts of the world. For example, in the former Soviet Union it has produced about 20 popular television programs on market economics shown primarily on their principal TV channel (Ostankino). One series, which compared the conditions in Russia (1995) with those in Weimar Germany, alerted Russians to the potential dangers of fascism they faced. In Israel the Obermayer Foundation published American Editorial Review, which provided Israelis with an indication of how and why American news media reacts to events in the Middle East. In the U.S. it supports the Black-Jewish Economic Roundtable, which catalyzes business interactions between these groups. In Germany it has also provided the seed funding and continuing support for the Creglingen Jewish Museum.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF BERLIN. The commitment to co-sponsor this event was made prior to the election of Walter Momper as the president. Their responsibility has been under the direction of Hendrik Kuebler, Referat Protokoll.

GERMAN JEWISH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF JEWISHGEN. This is an internet-based organization with more than 800 daily participants who are involved in German Jewish genealogy. It has been operating since 1998 through its discussion group and web site at www.jewishgen.org/gersig.

BOARD MEMBERS AND JURY

KAREN FRANKLIN is the director of the Judaica Museum in Riverdale, N.Y., and Director of the Family Research Program at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York City. She is former president of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies and past Chair of the Council of American Jewish Museums. Mrs. Franklin currently serves on the board of the American Association of Museums (AAM), the first director of a Jewish museum to be elected to this position. She also serves on the AAM Ethics Committee.

ERNEST KALLMANN has been writing family histories within a broader historical perspective, especially with the Cercle de Genealogie Juive, Paris. He was born in Mainz, escaped to France in 1933, and has lived there (except 1942-45), primarily as a telecommunications and computer management consultant.

WERNER LOVAL was born in Bamberg and at 13 escaped to England with the Kindertransport. He then lived in Ecuador and the United States before immigrating to Israel in 1954. Until 1966 he served in the Israel diplomatic service in the United States and Latin America. He is a founder and director of Israel's largest real estate brokerage company; former President of Har-El, Israel's first Reform Synagogue; and a governor both of Hebrew University of Jerusalem and of B'nai Brith World Centre. In 1999 he was named an Honorary Citizen of Jerusalem. He is a frequent visitor to Germany.

SARA NACHAMA was raised in Israel, graduated from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, moved to Berlin at the time of her marriage, and has worked for German television doing documentary films. From 1992 to 1999, she has done volunteer work for the annual Berlin Jewish Cultural Festival (Juedischen Kulturtag). Currently she is vice president of the support group for the Berlin Jewish hospital. Since 2001, Mrs. Nachama has been the executive director of the Berlin branch of Touro College (NY).

DR. ARTHUR OBERMAYER is a high-tech entrepreneur in the Boston area who has been involved in many philanthropic activities. He is an officer and board member of the American Jewish Historical Society, chaired the Genealogical Task Force of the Center for Jewish History, started a Jewish museum in his ancestral German town of Creglingen, was on the board of the internet genealogy supersite JewishGen, and initiated its German component.

PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF BERLIN, Walter Momper, historian, as represented by Hendrik Kuebler. Walter Momper, who was recently elected to this position, has been active in city politics and was Governing Mayor of Berlin when the wall came down in 1989. Kuebler has been in the Referat Protokoll since 1992

