

Visiting program 2019

Family Ehrenfeld / department store F. Ehrenfeld

Visitors: Jill Enfield, Rick Enfield and Gwen Pearl

The father of Jill, Rick and Gwen, Kurt Ehrenfeld (born 1921), came from Frankfurt. He was a former student of the Musterschule and classmate of Walter Sommer (for texts about the Sommer family, see links below). Kurt's brother Paul (born in 1924) first went to the



Hassel'sche Institut, a private school, and later went to the Philanthropin. The family lived in Stettenstraße 4 in Frankfurt and owned a summer house in Königstein-Falkenstein.

The grandparents, Hans and Alice Ehrenfeld, owned a department store in Frankfurt called F. Ehrenfeld on the Zeil 104 (later Schneider, today Myzeil), together with his brother Gustav and his wife Malwina Ehrenfeld. The father of the two brothers, Ferdinand Ehrenfeld, had founded the department store in 1874. After his death in 1910, the widow and two sons Hans and Gustav

took over the business.

The department store was known for its special department for radios and photos. It had specialized in electronic products early on. For example, the company participated in an international aviation exhibition in Frankfurt and exhibited free-flying aircraft models there.

In the 1920s, the department store F. Ehrenfeld entered the wireless business and played a leading role in the radio business. They also set up a special department for photos and had a photo lab.



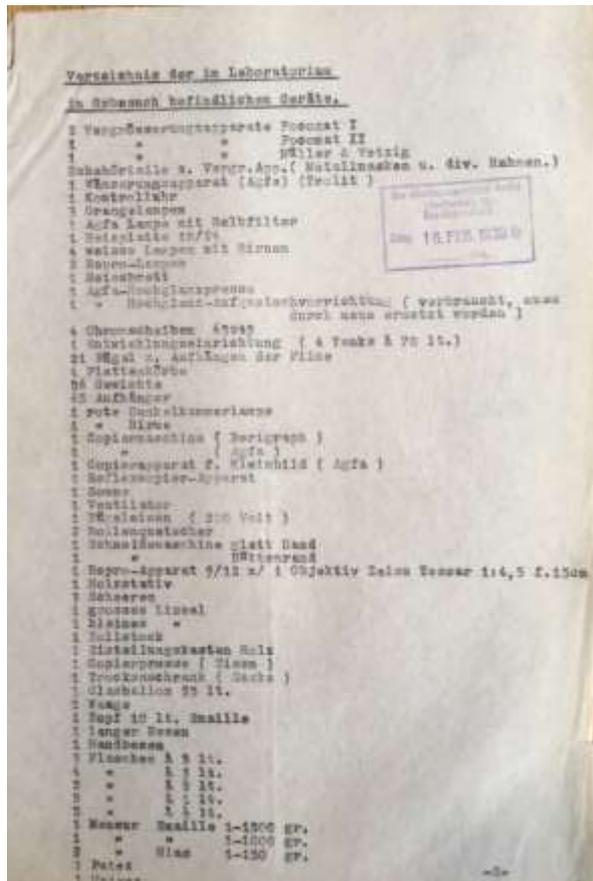
PROJEKT JÜDISCHES LEBEN FRANKFURT AM MAIN

The Nazi era had many effects on the lives of family members. The department store suffered from the boycott of various suppliers.

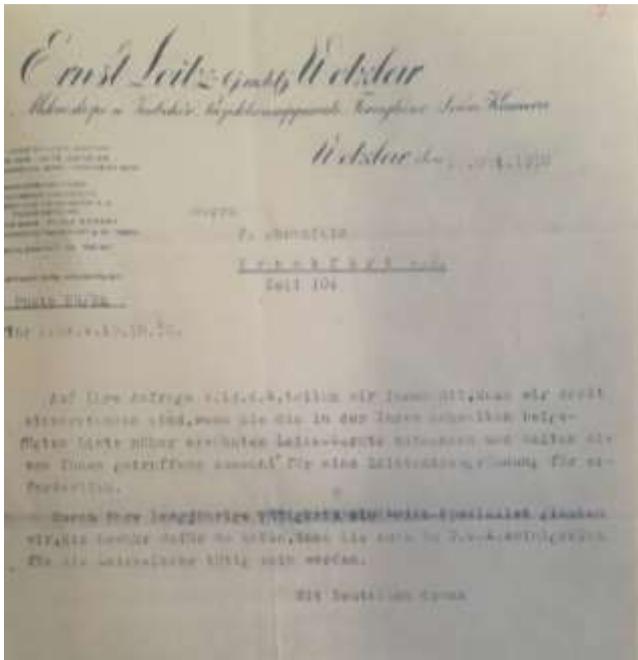
The lives of the children also changed during the Nazi era. After the forced change of school from the Muster-Schule Kurt emigrated to England in 1935 to continue his education there. His younger brother Paul was, after his schooling in Philanthropin, briefly employed as an apprentice at Leitz until the November Pogrom 1938.

In 1938, the Ehrenfeld brothers had to witness how the warehouse was attacked and devastated on 10 November ("the factory was a rubble heap"). They were both brought to Buchenwald. Since Hans Ehrenfeld already had concrete plans for emigration at that time, he was released after the forced Aryanization of the department store a few weeks later.

The Ehrenfelds fled via England to the USA. There,



thanks to the help of Leitz, they succeeded in rebuilding their livelihood. This is also apparent from the "Antrag auf Mitnahme von Umzugsgut" (application for removal of goods to move) made by Hans Ehrenfeld and the correspondence with the "Devisenstelle". Thus, the application also included a laboratory set up by the companies Zeis-Ikon and Leitz, as they are needed to "justify the new existence of Mr. Ehrenfeld in the United States". The consulent, a Jewish legal advisor, therefore asked the "Devisenstelle" to release this equipment to take with them. Leitz confirms the need to take these items with you. "On your request from 19.d.M. Let us inform you that if you include the devices mentioned in the list attached to your letter, we agree to the selection you have made for starting a business. Through your years of experience as a Leica specialist, we believe we have the guarantee that you will be successful in the USA for the Leica cause."



A letter from Zeis-Ikon to Hans Ehrenfeld indicates that the company is predicting a great future. "Your decision to found a company in the United States to carry the sophisticated, scientific small-image photography in institutes, industries and engineering companies must and will be a success. They will find a large field in the States that has not yet been worked on in this respect. But we feel obliged to point out from the start that this plan will only bring about the desired success if the organization and its structure are avoided. "

The brothers managed to build a new company in Florida, which was later continued by the sons Kurt and Paul.

Hans and Alice Ehrenfeld died in 1966 in their new home, Gustav 1964. The sons Kurt and Paul lived until 2009 and 2008 respectively.

Sources:

Hessian main state archive Wiesbaden
Jill Enfield

Links to articles about family Sommers:

- Unsere Wurzeln sind hier in Frankfurt. Begegnungen mit ehemaligen Frankfurterinnen und Frankfurtern jüdischer Herkunft und ihren Kindern, Hrsg.: Rieber, Angelika, Karben 2013, unter: <http://www.juedisches-leben-frankfurt.de/home/biographien-und-begegnungen/biographien-s/ron-sommers.html>
- Die Sommers – eine Familie aus Frankfurt. Erinnerung und Begegnung, in: Informationen 78, November 2013, Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift des Studienkreises Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945, Frankfurt, http://www.juedisches-leben-frankfurt.de/files/die_sommers_eine_familie_aus_frankfurt.pdf

Researches and Text: Angelika Rieber, June 2019