

THE FAMILY OF ROSA AND LEO BACH, FRIEDRICHSTRASSE 34, HEPPENHEIM

The Story of Rosa and Leo Bach

Born in Reichelsheim in 1885, Rosa is the third child of Lazarus and Katharina David. Katinka and Arthur are the elder siblings.

In 1892 the parents move to Friedrichstrasse 8½ in Heppenheim. Rosa is just turned 7 years old. We know little about the next few years.

She goes to school here. She will have had friends, met with other young people, told stories, laughed, just like other young people do.

She trains as a fashion designer and from 1904 on she is registered with her own shop at Friedrichstrasse 34 in Heppenheim.

Rosa David and Leo Bach announce their engagement in 1909. Leo was born in Einartshausen in Upper Hesse in 1881. Where did Rosa meet her fiancé? Did the families know each other? Did they meet in Bensheim where Leo was in business? We don't know.

In 1910 they marry. In January 1911 their son Kurt is born. In July 1912 Gerda enters the world. Rosa and Leo thereafter run the Friedrichstrasse business together.

On September 5th, 1912 the couple Rosa and Leo Bach are registered in the deeds as owners of the property at Friedrichstrasse 34.

For a price of 42,500 Reichsmark, they purchase the two-storey house with a shop unit on the ground floor. Here they have their textiles business. Building conversion work costs a further 25,000 RM. An advertisement from 1912 states:



Fig. 1: My special offers during building work are the *talk of the town*, because I'm offering garments, suit fabrics, apparel as well as underwear, cotton and woollens at extremely *cheap* prices. No-one should miss these bargains!

The house is described by Anna Zipp, who worked for a time as a servant with the Bachs, in the following way:

“The family’s living quarters consisted of a kitchen, living room, dining room, and bedroom and a loggia with two storage rooms on the first floor. And on the second floor there were another three rooms and a bathroom.” The living quarters were, according to Anna Zipp, well furnished. “The living room contained a wall cabinet, sofa, dresser, the furniture being made of walnut”. The couple and all children had plenty of clothes and crockery, etc.

The Bachs were a well-to-do family. The few surviving photos show them as looking very happy and contented.

Anna Zipp also reports on parties at the Bach household. Presumably the family were well integrated into the general life of the town of Heppenheim.

At the beginning of 1914, Rosa qualifies as a fashion designer.

It’s the time of the First World War. Leo Bach goes off to war. During one home leave he has his photograph taken in his yard: he’s wearing a uniform and he smiles while saluting at the camera, as also do the children Kurt and Gerda, aged about 4 and 5.

In 1918 Leo is awarded the Hessian bravery medal.

In 1933 the NSDAP comes to power.

Leo is a committee member of the israelite religious community. He is to be their last chairman.

In July 1936 he writes the following to the Hessian regional office in Heppenheim:

“... I must inform you that because of unpleasant occurrences I am resigning my post as committee chair. However, I have decided to remain on the committee.”

1936 is a year of upheaval.

Rosa and Leo have to leave their children. Kurt leaves first, then Gerda. She emigrates to South Africa. The parents will never see them again.

Rosa und Leo have great financial losses. Witnesses report that SA men are posted outside the shop to bar entry. In 1936 Leo can no longer run his manufacturing business.



Fig. 2: Kaufhaus Leo Bach Heppenheim is remaining closed for a few days. Re-opening after takeover by an aryan owner will be announced soon.

In October 1936, an advertisement in *Anzeigen- und Verordnungsblatt* can be seen in fig. 2.

And a short time later the announcement in fig. 3 appears.

Carl Schubert rents the house and moves his family in. He buys the complete warehouse for a price of 22,500 RM.

Freitag, den 9. Oktober 1938

Ich übernehme
das seit 33 Jahren bestehende
Kaufhaus Leo Bach, Heppenheim

Ich eröffne
am Samstag, dem 10. Oktober 1938,
vormittags 9.30 Uhr, mein Unternehmen.
Meine langjährige Erfahrung auf dem Textilmarkt
bietet Ihnen Gewähr für höchste Leistungsfähigkeit
und fachmännische Bedienung.

Carl Schubert Heppenheim

Deutsches Fachgeschäft Bedarfsdeckungsschelte werden angenommen

Konkursverfahren.
Über das Vermögen der Firma Bahette Hellmuth, Heidelberg, Inhaberin Kaufmanns Witwe, Bahette geb. Vogt in Heidelberg, wird heute vormittags 11 Uhr, das Konkursverfahren eröffnet.
Zum Konkursverwalter ist ernannt: Anton Spinner, Buchhändler in Heidelberg, Oberrheinstr. 50, Telefon Nr. 6002.
Konkursforderungen sind bis zum 25. Okt. einzureichen.

Ich bin mit dem Konkursverfahren in dem Konkursverfahren eingetragelt über das Vermögen der Firma Bahette Hellmuth, Heidelberg, Inhaberin Kaufmanns Witwe, Bahette geb. Vogt in Heidelberg, wird heute vormittags 11 Uhr, das Konkursverfahren eröffnet.
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Für das Eintopfgericht:
Knorr's Eintopfgericht 1/2 kg 30 Pf.
Maggi's Eintopfgericht 1/2 kg 15 Pf.
Erbsen gerichte 1/2 kg 20 Pf.
Weiße Bohnen 1/2 kg 20 Pf.
Wachtelbohnen 1/2 kg 24 Pf.
Linsen 1/2 kg 25, 30, 34 u. 36 Pf.
Rindfleisch im eigenen Saft. Das neue Leben 150 gr.

Der Wert entscheidet!
Wäre „Preis“ gleichbedeutend mit „We“ „Leicht“ „Voll“
Frage: ...

Fig. 3: I am taking over the Kaufhaus Leo Bach, Heppenheim, which has existed for 33 years. I will be open for business from October 10th, 1938 at 9.30 a.m. My many years of experience of the textiles market is your guarantee of the highest quality of efficiency and expert service.

The Bachs move into a flat in the attic.

Leo is arrested and sent together with other Jewish men from Heppenheim to Buchenwald concentration camp.

November 9–10, 1938: the night of the long knives. The Nazis break into the Bachs' house and destroy crockery and furniture.

Since Jews are not allowed to possess property in 1938, Rosa is forced to sell the house. The purchase price is 17,300 RM and is paid into an account to which the Bachs have no access. It is to become available to them in 1948.

Leo is released on December 12, 1938. According to one eye witness he returns with a wound to his head. And Rosa writes on December 17 to the tax inspector Wilke: "My husband has been back for some days. But because of a broken ankle he has had to go to the hospital ...". When he returns from Buchenwald the house is already sold.

March 18, 1942, the day of deportation. Rosa and Leo and the remaining Jews of Heppenheim are rounded up. Jewish citizens of Mainz, Worms, and South Hesse are gathered at the Justus Liebig school in Darmstadt. On March 24th 1942 a train transports 1000 Jewish people, including those from Heppenheim, from Darmstadt to Piaski in Poland.

The Bachs write twice to Anna Stegmann. The first postcard is sent from Darmstadt. She receives the second postcard 6 or 7 weeks later from an unspecified location.

There is no further sign of life from Rosa and Leo. Of the deported 1000 no-one is to survive.

The Aftermath

In Johannesburg on April 16th 1947 the following was officially recorded with witnesses:

“I, Kurt Bach and my sister Gerda Lutrin, Johannesburg, South Africa, herewith apply for the return or compensation for the following land:

Heppenheim. Province of Starkenburg, Hesse-Darmstadt, American Zone, Friedrichstrasse 34.”

Kurt had a trusted contact in Heppenheim, a friend of his father's, who for years had fought the cause for the descendants of the murdered Bachs. He is Martin Zipp, a baker in the Bahnhofstrasse. His wife was the ex-maid Anna, also a close friend of Rosa Bach.

Martin Zipp fought for the rights of the Bach children as their official trustee. Several times he wrote to the offices of reparation to reclaim all the property of the Bachs to the value of 40,000 DM.

On April 28th 1962 the following resolution was reached at the *Landesamt für Vermögenskontrolle und Wiedergutmachung* (state office for control of assets and reparations):

“The opponent of the claimant, Carl Schubert, is ordered to pay 773.75 DM to the heirs. The case is now closed.”

Kurt Bach

In 1933 Kurt Bach was 22 years old. There is one photo from this time. He's sitting between two girls on a wooden bench at the swimming baths – a cheerful picture. What job training did he have and where? Where did he work? In 1935 he was registered in Augsburg for 5–6 weeks. A year later he left Heppenheim and emigrated to South Africa. His nephew reports that he served in the South African army. He fought in Madagascar against the Vichy government and he fought in North Africa. His parents never saw him again. After the war he married a Swiss woman, Rachele, and lived with her in Johannesburg. They have no children. Kurt died in Switzerland in 1977 of a heart attack.

Gerda Bach

Born in 1912 in Heppenheim, Gerda attended the school for superior girls, followed by a school for domestic science. She worked as a maid. In September 1936 at the age of 24 she left the home that was no longer home. Before that her father took her to Frankfurt to buy her silver cutlery as a dowry for her to take with her. Leo accompanied Gerda to Genua on the train. He had to say goodbye to her. Forever. The ship took Gerda to Cape Town. From Cape Town she travelled by train to Johannesburg. In 1938 she married Solly Lutrin, who originated from Latvia. In 1940 Shirly was born, and six years later Calvin.

Gerda had a very good friend in South Africa: Käthe Sundheimer, born in the same year and the daughter of the Sundheimers of Lehrstrasse in Heppenheim. This friendship lasted a life long.

Gerda took her memories abroad with her. She told her children the Struwwelpeter stories. And she told about Anna Zipp who worked for her parents and helped them.

Gerda died in 2001.