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The Jewish Community of Bodenbach

From an excerpt from a German book received by Liesl Laufer from a friend and forwarded to the parents; date is around 1931. The excerpt refers to the work (article?) of E. Mauder in the book "Die Juden Böhmens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart" published by Verlag Briinn, Hugo Gold (last may be the editor's name).

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Even though it was very rare for Jews in past centuries to settle in smaller communities, and even though we can find "merchants of the mosaic religion" noted down (*verzeichnen*) in greater Bodenbach only after 1860, still older documents (*urkunden*) testify that even in the 16th century Jews already managed, now and then, to stay in our city. This is what a source from 1540, in the oldest city book of Tetschen, has to say: "Simon teuffel vom Pappert has bought a horse off the Jew Moses for 8 Schock Groschen, has to pay him in the coming year 1540 half and the other half on the new year 39." Furthermore: "Effective (*Aktum*) Monday after Advent 1541 Simon Teufel has become guarantor (*Burge*) for his cousin (*Vetter*) Havel Teufel against Itzik the Jew before 3 florins which are due to be paid on (to?) George in the year 1542. If he does not however pay and is past due (*saumig*), then he is to go in (*eingehen*--probably, be arrested) at his own cost, as he has volunteered to do, as long as Itzig the Jew is not paid." Moses was--as one can read in a different place in the collection of documents--a merchant from Trebnitz, Itzik a local resident (*Ansässiger*) who knew Teufel well, because an outsider Jew would not have taken Teufel, owner of the Pappert property, as a guarantor. Tetschen had no "Privilegium" by which Jews were forbidden from staying inside the domains of its authority (*Herrschaftsgebiete*) or even settle there, but it always (*seit jeher*) quietly resisted Jewish settlers and merchants. In spite of that it can be proved that already in the 17th and 18th centuries Jews from Poland and Prague traded in our vicinity, specifically, selling in Eastern Europe the product of the paper mill of Bensen, which in those days enjoyed a wide reputation. Thus in the years 1720 to 1756 there lived a Sa(li) or Sa(muel) Rosenzweig in Weiher, in house no. 26, under the name Franz Wernher, and he conducted a retail trade with Hungary and Romania which included, in addition to glass wares of the region of Haida and Steinschonau, also paper of Bensen, on trips which often lasted a whole year. As stated in the protocol of his arrest (*Festnahme*), he deceived local residents and authorities with his red-blond hair and his clean-shaved face, but he had a family that lived in Prague's Jewish town, visited it each time he returned from his travels and earned a small fortune. (Notes of the late factory-owner (*Fabrikant*) Adolf Paechter, Bodenbach).

The Emperor Joseph the 2nd decreed (*bestimmte mit Patent*) on July 23, 1787, that

Jews should adopt certain family names and German first names, so that inaccuracies and discrepancies in official (birth?) records (*Matriken der Aemter*) would be avoided. Any naming in the Jewish language or by the locality of residence had to cease (*entfallen*). Already in 1754, following a general police ordinance by [empress] Maria Theresa, Jewish communities were obliged to provide (*verfassen*) an annual report of coverage and payment of taxes and dues to be paid (*abgaben*), and this same report had to be submitted before the authorities for validation and approval (*und denselben der Grundobrikeit zur ueberprufung und genehmigung vorzulegen*).

The first Jew to settle in Tetschen after the decree of April 1848 (*April-urkunde vom Jahre 1848*), which granted all citizens of the former Austrian monarchy full freedom of faith and conscience (*Gewissen*) was Moritz Mansfeld, originally of Dresden, who started in 1865 to conduct a vigorous (*schwunghaftes*) trade in grains, had his boats in Weiher and sailed from there all the way to Hamburg, from where he brought us other merchandise. From 1863 the Bodenbach railroad station employed a border policeman of German citizenship, the Jew Jacob Sonntag, who in 1866 assumed local citizenship, gave up his position and set up in 1867 a money-exchange shop, later a bank. His first apprentice was David Taussig, who later set up his own bank. Taussig, who was bom in 1853 and died in 1916, gained much merit by promoting banking in Bodenbach (*erwarb sich um das Bankwesen in Bodenbach mancherlei Verdienste*). His banking business which opened in 1885 acquired in 1905 the Bodenbach branch of the Anglobank, in the same building. Taussig was until 1908 the director of that branch, after which he set up another banking business, which he sold at the outbreak of the 1914 war to the Viennese bank association. In that bank he held (*bekleidete*) the position of a board member until his passing. The well-known attorney (*Anwalt*) and defender of the interests of German inhabitants in Prague, Dr. Josef Eckstein (in his time city councilor of Prague) may be recognized as the first Jew bom in Bodenbach. He was born in 1866 in Bodenbach in the cellar of the Laubisch house (no. 20), on the same day as the Prussians entered Bodenbach. His father owned a small distillery with a tavern in the same house.

Already in 1875 Jews would meet in the apartments of their co-religionists, to conduct their prayers (*ihre Andacht zu verrichten*). In the year 1885 matters advanced to the founding of a house-of-worship committee and the factory owner Adolf Pachter made available as prayer hall a garden pavillion erected for this purpose, at his own expense, on his property at the stone-nut-buttons factory in Bodenbach. However, because this space proved too small for all members of the community, especially during the high holidays, the service on holidays was moved to the hall of the armory (*Zeughaus*) (until 1888) and later

to the hall of the High House (*Hohen Haus*) (later a workers' home, now peoples' hall (*Volkshalle*) no. 344).

The founders of the Israelite congregation association (*Kultusverein*) which was constituted on 30 July 1887 were: factory owner Adolf Pachter of Bodenbach, tobacco wholesaler (*Tabakhauptverleger*) Siegmund Brauner of Tetschen, merchant Gottfried Pick of Weiher, merchant Karl Heller of Tetschen, merchant Moritz Frankl of Weiher, Friedrich Flaschner and J.H. Sonntag of Bodenbach and Hugo Schwartz of Tetschen. The number of members in the founding year was 48, the total number of souls 162.

In March 1888, full five years before the legal decree (*gesetzliche Bestimmung*) which obligated congregations to provide for the employment of a rabbi and for religious instruction, a Chevra-Kadisha was founded in Bodenbach, which already in the year of its founding enrolled 30 members. The first supervisors (*Obmanner*) were Gottfried Pick, a merchant in the Weiher subdivision of Bodenbach (No. 312), and the Tetschen merchant Karl Heller. On the 1st of October of the same year Adolf Leder started his service here as independent religious teacher. He was born in 1850 at Brennpörschen, was active as Jewish teacher between 1872 and 1888 in Flochau, Bresnitz and Kaunova, and he stayed in Bodenbach until 1894 when he moved to an appointment in Chlumetz. Lederer taught religion in Bodenbach, Tetschen, Eulau, Bensen, Wemstadt and Boehmisch-Kamnitz, to which communities came school-age children from all surrounding communities, to participate in religious lessons (*Schulsprengel*).

In that year Bodenbach and Tetschen contained 168 souls of Jewish faith. Until 1896, however, the Jews of Bodenbach and its surrounding were tallied with respect to official (birth?) records (*Matrikenführung*) with the Jewish community of Boehmisch-Leipa. But the local Israelite congregation of Bodenbach-Tetschen advanced through the constant efforts of its congregational organization, which in the year 1894 boasted 67 members with 177 souls. Pachter, Brauner, Heller, Pick, Flaschner, Freund, Sonntag and Schwartz strove tirelessly to achieve the status of a community (*Kultusgemeinde*) and on 21 July 1896 its statutes were approved by the governor's office (*Statthaltereie*) in Prague under the number 115,779. Even before this the congregation hired Max Freund as rabbi and religious teacher, and he began serving on May 1, 1894. Freund (born 1860 in Písek) had actively taught since 1883 and was previously rabbi and chief teacher at the two-class Israelite private elementary school in Libochovitz. What he achieved (*Ersprisenliches geleistet*) as human being, teacher and spiritual leader over almost 25 years can only be appreciated by his fellows-in-faith. His untimely death at age 58 occurred on July 11, 1918.

The founders and first board of the Jewish community were:

Adolf Pachter, factory owner, president.

Siegmund Brauner, tobacco wholesaler (*Tabakhauptverleger*), Tetschen,
vice president.

Karl Heller, merchant, Tetschen, board member.

Gottfried Pick, Merchant, Weiher,

Moritz Frankl, merchant, Weiher, "

Friedrich Flaschner, merchant, Bodenbach, " "

J.H. Sonntag, Bodenbach

Hugo Schwartz, Tetschen " "

The community also founded a fund for the needy (*Armenkasse*), an emergency fund (*Notstandsfond*) for Jewish emigrants and a women's association (*Frauenverein*), and great credit for these organizations goes to the unselfish efforts of Mr. J. Herschmann of Bodenbach, S.L. Jung of Tetschen and Mrs. Dr. M. Hoffman of Bodenbach. Mr. Adolf Paechter was active as first leader of the community until his passing in October 1915. His successor until 1921 was his son Alfred Paechter, after which Mr. Alois Zirkl, a merchant from Tetschen, held the post until 1927. Since that time the post of community leader is held by Mr. Jacob Lamberg of Bodenbach, a lumber wholesaler.

After the passing of the still unforgettable Rabbi Max Freund, the post of a temporary religious teacher was taken by Rabbi Dr. J. Krengel of Boehmish- Leipa, starting November 15, 1918. In September 1919 the newly-elected Rabbi Dr. Oskar Karpelis started his service at the local Jewish community. He was born in 1887 in Pauslarn (Moravia), received his degree (*promovierte*) in 1913 as doctor of philosophy at the German University in Prague and served as rabbi in Prerau from November 1913 to April 1919. During the war he served as military chaplain from December 1914 to January 1918. Dr. Karpelis moved in July 1929 to Vienna where he now serves as religious teacher in local middle schools (*mittelschulen*). Currently his position is vacant.

In the year 1921 the number of souls in the community came to 321 with 153 dues-paying members, in 1927 it had 400 souls and 175 dues-payers. In that year the community had the following structure:

President (*Vorstand*): Alois Zirkl, Tetschen.

Vice-president (*Stellvertreter*): Alfred Pachter, Bodenbach

Board members (*Vorstandsmitglieder*): Dr. Salus, Dr. Eckstein
(Tetschen), J. Lamberg and G. Duschek (Bodenbach).
Executive board (?) (*Engerer Vorstand*): Oswald Kraus, A. Koralek,
J. Heilman, Ad. Abeles, and Max Pollatschek.
Chairman (*Obman*) of the Dr. Herzl club: Dr. Fritz Eckstein.
President of the women's association: Mrs. Dr. Hoffman.
Chevra Kadisha: Gottlieb Pick.
Temple supervisor (*Tempelvorsteher*): Siegmund Duschek.
Income: 20,000 Czech crowns, expenses 82,000 Czech crowns.

As early as 1892 funds were collected among faith-members in the Tetschen district for the purpose of building a temple. In the year 1901 an Israelite Temple Society was founded for the purpose of erecting and maintaining a house of worship. Here too the members of the steering committee (*Ausschussrat*) and managing council (*Verwaltungsrat*) of the Jewish community were the ones who provided serious funds for the construction of the financial foundation (*Grundstock*) of the temple. In the year 1906 it became possible to realize the plans and build a fitting (*wuerdigen*) temple. After various negotiations of the community organization with land owners in Bodenbach, in which it tried to buy the exercise hall of the German gymnastic association, which had proved too small for the association's needs, it acquired the Stolze house (previously owned by Adalbert Hochelber) which included a large garden plot. The construction was carried out by the Firma of Putz and Weber of Bodenbach, with a cost (*Kostenaufwande*) of around 100,000 Czech crowns, and it was commissioned (*seiner bestimmung iibergeben werden konnte*) in 1907.

The cemetery of the Israelite community was opened in 1890-1 and its maintenance lies in the hands of the Israelite Burial Brotherhood, whose statutes were approved by the governor's office in Prague under the number 65,070. The purpose of the society is to insure a fitting burial to its members and the maintenance and proper outfitting of the site, which is attached to the general Rosawitz cemetery.

Because Bodenbach, being a border station, is frequently visited by poor Jews, the support and further travel of these poor persons passing through the town is handled by a special center. Here too the ones who provided the initial funds for this center were the members Pachter, Brauner, Frankl, Pick, Freund, Heller, Zirkl and Dr. Bergmann. The last-mentioned was the first attorney (*Rechtsanwalt*) who settled in Bodenbach (died 1926).

In the year 1930 the Israelite community presented the following picture:

Community leaders:

Jacob Lamberg, Bodenbach, president.
 Dr. Hugo Hoffer, Bodenbach, vice-president.
 Robert Riibenstein, Bodenbach, treasurer (*Kassier*).
 Alfred Pachter, Bodenbach, secretary (*Schriftfuhrer*).
 Max Pollatschek, Bodenbach, Temple supervisor.

Representatives of the community:

Dr. Fritz Eckstein, Tetschen
 Rudolf Feigl, Tetschen
 Otto Schwartz, Tetschen
 Otto Goldbach, Bodenbach
 Eduard Werner, Bodenbach
 Dr. Josef Salus, Bensen.

Substitutes (*Ersatzmanner*)

Jacob Heilman, Bodenbach
 Karl Konjirsch, Bodenbach
 Oskar Lobl, Bodenbach
 Erwin Reiner, Bodenbach
 Josef Popper, Bdhmisch-Kamnitz

Treasury oversight and expenses committee (*Kassa-revisoren und Umlage Kommission*)

Siegmund Duschek, Bodenbach
 Leopold Fleischer, Bodenbach
 Rudolf Barsch, Bodenbach
 Siegmund Rind, Bodenbach
 Adolf Kaunders, Bohmisch-Kamnitz.

School committee (*Schulkommission*)

Dr. Fritz Eckstein, Tetschen
 Otto Kletter, tetschen
 Josef Popper, Bohmisch-Kamnitz
 Dr. Josef Salus, Bensen
 Ing. Rudolf Poliak, Bodenbach

Otto Goldbach, Bodenbach
 Alfred Pachter, Bodenbach

Committee for religious services and cemetery (*Gottesdienst und
 Friedh ofskomm ission*)

Dr. Fritz Eckstein, Tetschen
 Otto Kletter, Tetschen
 Rudolf Feigl, Tetschen
 Karl Konjirsch, Bodenbach
 Moritz Londner, Bodenbach
 Josef Neumann, Bodenbach
 Dr. Anton Kugel, Bodenbach
 Ing. Rudolf Poliak, Bodenbach
 Adolf Pachter, Bodenbach (?)
 Max Pollatschek, Bodenbach.

Arbitration (*Schiedesgericht*)

Emil Heller, Bodenbach
 Dr. Ign. (Ing?) Jochovits, Bodenbach
 Josef Neumann, Bodenbach

Charity (*Armenwesen*)

Otto Goldbach for Bodenbach
 Otto Kletter for Tetschen

Property manager (*Haus- und Inventarverwalter*)

Jacob Hellmann, Bodenbach
 Health advisor (*Sanitatsreferent*)
 Dr. Anton Kugel

Cemetery inspector

Otto Schwartz, Tetschen

Building advisor

Ing. Rudolf Poliak, Bodenbach.

Cantor:

Bernhard Insel, also religious teacher.

Rabbi: (currently vacant)