



## Engelsgrube 50 - The Fisch family

The Fisch Family, metalworker Wolf Fisch, his wife Betty, née Cohn, and their two children Hanna and Siegfried, lived at Engelsgrube 50 in several different flats before finally living in the flat on the third floor.



Engelsgrube 46-52, Museum for Art and Cultural History of the Hanseatic City of Lübeck, a segment of a photo by Dr. Wember, no year given

Wolf Fisch was born in Lomse (Lomza) in Poland east of Bialystok on 24 December 1891. After World War One he came to Lübeck, where he got to know Betty Cohn. She was born on 14 March 1891 and belonged to a long time resident Lübeck family. Their marriage took place in Lübeck on 29 October 1920.

Their daughter Hanna was born on 30 September 1921, and their son Siegfried on 30 December 1922. Soon afterwards in 1923, Wolf Fisch set up his own business as an ornamental metalworker and building locksmith.

Until 1932 the family lived on the second floor at Lindenstraße 27a. The two children went to the primary schools nearby on Moislinger Allee. Hanna attended the girls school, the present day Bugenhagenschule, and Siegfried went to the boys school, today called Lutherschule.

From 1933 on the Lübeck address records listed their residence and the workshop here at Engelsgrube 50. The metalwork shop was on the ground floor. Hanna was sent to the Burgschule (the Fortress School) at Große Burgstraße, Siegfried attended the Katharineum (the Catherine High School). For their religious education they went to St.-Annen-Straße, where they were taught in the same class.

### Installation at the location



### Inscriptions of the installations:

HIER WOHNTE  
**BETTY FISCH**  
**GEB. COHN**  
 JG. 1891  
 DEPORTIERT 1941  
 ERMORDET IN  
 RIGA

HIER WOHNTE  
**HANNA FISCH**  
 JG. 1921  
 DEPORTIERT 1941  
 ERMORDET IN  
 RIGA

installation  
 12 April 2008



Students of the Jewish Religious School

One of Hanna's school-friends at Burgschule was Gisela Schäfer, who lived with her parents and three siblings at An der Untertrave 44/45. On their way to school they went along Engelsgrube past No. 50, where Hanna's father sold and repaired bicycles. Every Saturday one of the girls of Hanna's class picked her up from home and carried her satchel, which she was not allowed to do on the Shabbat. Her class teacher, Herr Gabriel, always saw to it that this task wasn't forgotten.

Hanna was small and petite, more a quiet and very dear girl, who Gisela Schäfer often played with. One of their meeting places was the green near the Swing Bridge, where a whole group of girls used to play with clay marbles or "Picker" as they were called locally. Hide and seek was also among their popular games.

Once, when tobogganing down the hill to Hafenstrasse, Gisela Schäfer had an accident with a cyclist, who was enraged and carried the damaged bike to her father. Hanna's father immediately repaired the bike for free, which helped her get out of trouble with her father.

After public school Gisela Schäfer started her vocational training at Margarethe Vitense's milliner's workshop at Huxstraße 13. Her way to work also went along Engelsgrube, passing Wolf Fisch's business. One morning in November 1938 the windows of the cycle shop were shattered, as well as those of a furniture showroom, which was on her way as well. That day she had lessons at her vocational school in St.-Annen-Straße. From her seat she could see the synagogue across the street and suddenly observed flames. Her teacher cut short the lesson and upon dismissing the class admonished them to go home at once.

She never saw Hanna and her family again after Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass 9 November 1938). She had however once met Hanna's brother Siegfried after the war.

"Reichskristallnacht" destroyed the family's life. Wolf Fisch was arrested on 10 November 1938, was first in so-called preventive protection in Lübeck and was then sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, north of Berlin, where he had to do very hard work and was maltreated. On 9 January 1939 he was released from Sachsenhausen. A few days after arriving home he escaped to Shanghai.

The Lübeck trade corporation had already deleted his name from the registry of tradesmen, as well as those of other Jewish craftsmen.

Siegfried Fisch had to leave the Katharineum (the high school he was attending). A year later, on 21 November 1939 the "elementary and high school for Jews" in Hamburg gave him the following certificate of attendance:

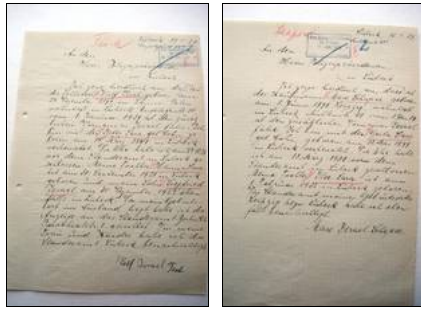
*"Siegfried Israel Fisch, born in Lübeck on 30 December 1922, has attended the continuing education class (department for metalwork) of our school since 10 March 1939. The metalworker's training course generally takes two years, therefore it can be expected that Fisch has to attend the training workshop until April 1941. Working hours: 08:00 to 15:00 daily."*

What his sister Hanna did during this time is not known. She possibly trained to become dressmaker, presumably in Hamburg too.

On 20 May 1939 Betty Fisch received the demand from the Lübeck chief of police to leave pre-war Germany with her children within ten days. The fact that her husband was regarded as stateless was obviously now also used against her and both her children, even though all three of them were born and grew up in Lübeck. The family's efforts to find a way to emigrate were thoroughly scrutinized by the police. It says on a review list of July 1939 that Siegfried Fisch had volunteered for Palestine and had informed the police that he was moving to Neuendorf near Berlin. There was a Hachschara institution in Neuendorf preparing people for life in Palestine. Hanna Fisch applied to go to England, and Betty Fisch to Shanghai.

Siegfried Fisch remembers that all three of them had already had tickets for the ship Conte Blanca Mano to Shanghai in July 1939, but after being pressured by the Jewish Organisations his mother

had passed the tickets on for other Jewish people, who had been in more desperate straits. So only Betty Fisch's sister, Gerda Schapse, née Cohn, with her daughter Ilse, her husband Max Schapse and her brother-in-law could follow Wolf Fisch to Shanghai.



Compulsory first  
name: Wolf Fisch

Compulsory first  
name: Max Schapse

In the letters from Dora and Bertha Lexandrowitz to their relatives in Shanghai the Fisch and Schapse families are quickly mentioned a few times. Among other things one letter dated 7 June 1940 says:

*"By the way Frau D. just told me that Frau Fisch and the children had received their permit today. She is very angry that she hasn't received hers yet, though one didn't know yet, whether the Fisch family could travel to Shanghai and how. For the stateless people transit visas via Siberia are also hard to get and we'll have to wait to find out what will happen." (p. 95)*

Betty Fisch and her two children didn't manage to leave Germany. In a conversation in June 1993 with Siegfried Fisch, who survived the deportation and the years in Riga, he shared what he remembered about that time. His family, as well as many other Jewish families, had to come to the Jewish old people's home next to the synagogue at St.-Annen - Straße 11. They were told that they would be employed in Riga. Besides their personal baggage they could take woollen blankets, food and a stove. They had marched from the synagogue to the train station in close formation in broad daylight on the 6th of December, through various streets including the Holstenstraße, one of the main streets in Lübeck. At the train station a passenger car and a freight car were waiting. They loaded their baggage themselves and never saw it again.

The train went via Bad Oldesloe, where the Hamburg Jews were added, to Riga. They arrived at Jungfernhof, a former estate. There was an old dilapidated barn, in which thousands of people were accommodated on four-tiered wooden racks. The winter of 1941 was very cold. It was snowing through the broken roof. Siegfried Fisch was immediately separated from his mother and sister. Months later he had seen his sister once again in the Riga ghetto, but he never saw his mother again, and it can be assumed that she had been killed immediately.

Hanna Fisch lost her life at Stutthof concentration camp (Poland) at the end of 1944 after three years of hard work, hunger and harassment.

After the war Wolf Fisch first lived in Palestine, later Israel, and then returned to Lübeck. Wolf's son, Siegfried, was also living in Lübeck after returning from Riga. Siegfried had married and lived in Lübeck with his wife and children until his death in 2002.

### References in Addition to Standard Reference Materials:

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- Conversations with contemporaries of the Fish family

Heidemarie Kugler-Weimann, 2008

Translation: Martin Harnisch and Glenn Sellick, 2010

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