



Charlottenstraße 26

The three Grünfeldt sisters lived at Charlottenstraße 26 from 1912 until early December 1941.

Their apartment was on the second floor to the left and had a parlour, dining room, bedroom and a kitchen as well as a room in the attic upstairs as another bedroom.



building Charlottenstraße
26; Foto Heidemarie
Kugler-Weimann, 2008

Emma Grünfeldt was born on 8 September 1880 in Wismar and worked as a teacher at the Second St.Jürgenschule (later called Kahlhorstschule) at Kahlhorststraße 41 nearby.



Emma Grünfeldt with her class
1933/34; from the private archive
of Dr. Peter Guttkuhn

Her sister Minna was four years her senior, and was born in Wismar on 25 October 1876. For many years she worked as a telephone operator at the Lübeck telephone exchange, then as a school secretary at the Katharineum (a high school) and later as a shop assistant.

Installation at the location



Inscriptions of the installations:

HIER WOHNTE
MINNA GRÜNFELDT
JG. 1876
DEPORTIERT 1941
ERMORDET IN
RIGA

HIER WOHNTE
CLARA GRÜNFELDT
JG. 1878
DEPORTIERT 1941
ERMORDET IN
RIGA

HIER WOHNTE
EMMA GRÜNFELDT
JG. 1880
DEPORTIERT 1941
ERMORDET IN
RIGA

installation
12 April 2008



Minna Grünfeldt;
from the private
archive of Dr. Peter
Guttkuhn

Clara, born in Wismar on 25 January 1878, managed the household of the three sisters.



Clara Grünfeldt;
from the private
archive of Dr. Peter
Guttkuhn

The “Grünfeldt, Geschwister (i.e. siblings), Charlottenstraße 26” - was a consistent entry in the Lübeck directories up to 1942. They lived secluded lives, in solid middle-class circumstances. They were modest and ready to help out in their easygoing neighbourhood.

In the early summer of 1893 the widow Pauline Grünfeldt had moved with her children from Wismar to Lübeck two years after the death of her husband, the merchant factory owner Bernhard Grünfeldt. While their mother belonged to the Jewish community until her death in 1915, her children detached themselves from their Jewish faith. Emma was baptized as an adult into the Lutheran Protestant faith probably in 1897, her senior sister Minna followed in 1900. Clara Grünfeldt left the Jewish community, but remained non-denominational.

For Emma Grünfeldt becoming a Lutheran Protestant really opened up the possibilities of becoming a teacher, for in Lübeck only members of the Lutheran confession were hired as teachers in state schools. Jews were denied employment in state-run elementary schools on the principle that they were not allowed to teach protestant religious education. In 1912 Emma Grünfeldt got the position of a teacher at elementary schools on a permanent basis. The fact that she was a practising Christian, and had been born a Jew was not known by anybody in the Free Hanseatic City of Lübeck, and it was really of no interest and importance to anyone.

This all changed when the Nazis took office. Emma Grünfeldt was able to prevent her dismissal in April 1933 on the basis of the “Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums“ (Civil Service Restoration Act), pointing out that she had already become a civil servant before 1914.

At the end of August 1935 however she was immediately relieved of her duties at the initiative of the Lübeck deputy for education and culture, senior government official Dr. Wolff (NSDAP) even though as of yet there was no legal basis for her dismissal. But shortly afterwards the Nuremberg Race Laws were passed and on 1 January 1936 she was forced into retirement.

Being removed from professional and social contacts, the deterioration of the social situation in general and the discrimination created by continuous administrative measures led to a feeling of increasing isolation without any end in sight. Neither did the hitherto silence of the Lutheran parish give Emma and Minna in their anguish any encouragement nor comfort. On the contrary, the pastor of the cathedral congregation who had been in office in Lübeck since January 1936 and to whose parish both women belonged, was a member of the extremely radical wing of the (Nationalkirchlichen Deutschen Christen (NDC)) National Church of German Christians. He also proved to be an Anti-Semite, who later worked at the Eisenach “Institute for the research into and the elimination of the Jewish influence on German church life”.

In the last quarter of 1938 the Grünfeldts had to obtain the stigmatising J(ew) identity card at the

Lübeck police headquarters and pay an administrative charge of three Reichsmarks for the card, and at the same time adopt the additional compulsory first name of "Sara".



Compulsory first names - Emma and Clara Grünfeldt; Archive of the Hanseatic City Lübeck

On 23 February 1939 the governing body of the German Christian Church, which was sanctioned by the National Socialists Regime and directed by NS-bishop Erwin Balzer enacted the "Law concerning the situation of Protestant Jews in the church", which said: "Jews cannot become members of the Lutheran Protestant Church in Lübeck". No parish pastor was obliged to perform any official duties with regards to even those, "who had become members of the Lutheran Protestant Church of Lübeck prior to the Law coming into effect", nor could church rooms and institutions be used by them. Thus the last hopes and illusions of receiving any help and support from the church had been rendered impossible for Emma and Minna Grünfeldt as well.

Like all the other Jewish families who had remained in Lübeck the Grünfeldts had to apply for, collect and redeem their steadily reduced food-ration cards and textile coupons starting in mid September 1939 from a special issuing office of the social administration, department for institutions and workshops, at St.-Annen-Straße 1-3. As Jews were not allowed to enter „Aryan“ shops, the consumer goods still granted them had already been bought by the City's social services office and its purchasing department was responsible for supervising the selling of these goods to Jews.

On 24 October 1941 the Lübeck police headquarters received a letter as follows:

"In my capacity as a cell leader of the local NSDAP-branch St.Jürgen I have been informed that the Jews, the 3 Grünfeldt siblings, resident at Charlottenstraße 26, either don't wear the Star of David or don't wear it visibly by hiding it under their fur collars for the most part. It would also be advisable to examine the food ration-cards of these Jews, if they bear in addition to their first names the additional name "Sara" also, as it can be suspected that with their typical Jewish insolence, they don't bear these names. A. Wulff, police inspector".

For many years Alfred Wulff (1889 -1961) lived as a neighbour of the Grünfeldts in the same street. He owned Charlottenstraße 25, where he lived on the first floor diagonally opposite (kitty corner from) the Grünfeldts. They knew each other. Wulff worked at police headquarters as an official and had been promoted several times since 1933. He sent his slanderous accusations against his neighbours to the appropriate department II 1 at headquarters and made a request to the 5th Police station of the suburb St.Jürgen, Ratzeburger Allee 1, to make appropriate inquiries and observations. If the accusations were correct, charges could have been brought against the accused. (Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, Polizeiverwaltung 120)

The investigating police sergeant, Johann Feudel, gave an interim report on 4 December 1941: The Grünfeldts bore the properly applied yellow star of David on the left breast of their coats, had also been met on the street wearing it. They didn't own ration-cards for clothes. "The food ration-cards were inspected. On doing so they were instructed by me that they were not allowed to omit the additional first name of Sara on their food ration-cards. Further observations will continue".

Meanwhile the three sisters had received their „evacuation order“ from the Lübeck Gestapo, for a so called "work detail in the East". They were allowed to take up to 50 kilos of baggage each. But the Grünfeldts, who were between 61 and 65 years old, were physically not in a position to take more than the most necessary things with them. Moreover, a few days before the deportation Clara had slashed her wrists from desperation. The doctor who was called first refused to come; the second took care of her but only poorly. Before that the police and Gestapo officers had arrived at their flat to catalogue items of furniture and forbade them to sell or damage anything.

For hours the Grünfeldts were waiting in the evening of the 5th of December for their transportation to the assembling camp, which the Lübeck Gestapo had determined to be the „Asylum“ at 11 St.-Annen-Straße, which still belonged to the Jewish community. They were sitting on the stairs in the narrow cold and dark hall of their house, silent and apathetic, waiting to hand the police and Gestapo the keys to their apartments, so the Gestapo could collect the

furnishing of their flats a few days later. What the Gestapo could not make use of themselves was handed over to the Lübeck tax office to be auctioned off.

About 10 o'clock on 6 December 1941 approximately 92 people from Lübeck who had been assembled at 11 St.-Annen-Straße boarded two large municipal buses to be taken to the main train station. Their baggage followed in lorries (trucks). In Bad Oldesloe the train goods wagons (freight cars) from Lübeck – together with 42 Jews deported from Kiel, Rendsburg, Ratzeburg and Ahrensburg – were coupled to the fourth transport from Hamburg with 753 people, which was to be sent to the “Reichskommissariat Ostland” (Ostland was the name given to the German occupied territories of the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), eastern parts of Poland, and western parts of Belarus.). The Ostland was predominantly under the Schleswig-Holstein civil administration.

After three days and nights the journey via the Deutsche Reichsbahn (German Reich's Railway) ended on a siding of the Skirotova train station southeast of Riga. The intimidated and exhausted people, who didn't know where they were and what was awaiting them, were forced by German and Latvian SS-men to march for about 3 kilometres in the snow and cold to a so-called reception camp. It was named “Jungfernhof” (Jumpravmuiza) and was a large former estate that had been converted into an airfield during the time of the soviet occupation of Latvia.

The area of the camp was extensive with its western edge directly bordering the Dūna (Daugava River). On the camp's ground there were besides the manor house a few row house cottages and several old large barns and stables, which were used by the German civil administration as segregated men and women camps.

After all their documents and items of baggage had been taken from them between 6,000 and 8,000 people had been driven together into this concentration camp. One of the six- to seven-tiered, narrow wooden beds was each person's accommodation. Snow and cold came through the broken roofs. With little food, inadequate sanitary facilities and only one water pump the situation of the imprisoned people deteriorated alarmingly every day.

The extraordinarily harsh East-European winter with its weeklong freezing temperatures between -25° and -35° C and the murderous harassment by the SS-guards produced a high death rate. Richard J. Yashek / Jürgen Jaschek, one of the few survivors from Lübeck and Bad Schwartau near Lübeck, estimated that from December 1941 to March 1942 about 800 people died of hunger, cold and disease alone at the Jungfernhof concentration camp. As the ground was frozen meters deep, the corpses were piled mountain-high.

In February 1942 about a thousand children, women and sick people were transported on lorries to the Bikernieki Forest where they were shot. A second such murderous action happened on 26 March 1942. The commander of the Riga Ghetto, Karl Wilhelm Krause, had circulated the command by way of the administration of Jungfernhof and all the other camps around Riga that those who were weak and older people should volunteer for light work at a completely fictitious factory for the canned food firm Dünamünde (Daugavgriva), while sick people would be sent to the Riga Ghetto. About 5,000 people – mostly women and men over 50 - volunteered, and were loaded on to trucks every half hour only to be shot in the near Bikernieki Forest. Presumably most of the people from Lübeck as well as the Grünfeldt sisters were victims of this murderous action.

After the end of World War Two the Lübeck town clerk's office made the following entry on the three registration cards “Grünfeldt”: “Registration officially cancelled. Moved. Place unknown. Evacuated. On 6 December 1941.” The first and hitherto last official response of their hometown to their fatal deportation.

Dr. Peter Guttkuhn, 2008

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- Zeitzeugengespräche (Conversations with contemporaries of the Grünfeldt Sisters)

Detailed information on the Grünfeldt Sisters is to be found in the booklet by Dr. Peter Guttkuhn, Die Lübecker Geschwister Grünfeldt, Vom Leben, Leiden und Sterben "nichtarischer" Christinnen, Lübeck 2001, edited by Kirchenkreis Lübeck der Nordelbischen Ev.-Luth. Kirche

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