



Fischergrube 22 - The Katz Family

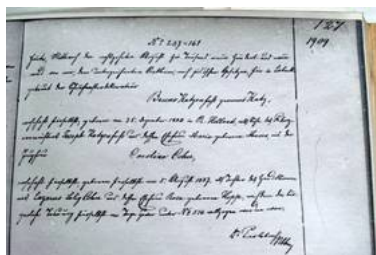
Bruno and Caroline Katz and their children had lived at Fischergrube 22 since the end of 1932. Their flat was on the first floor to the right.



An undated photograph of Fischergrube 22 [1]

Bruno Katz (also known as Katzenfuß) was born on 25 December 1880 in Preußisch Holland (name of the town) near Elbing in West Prussia. He first came to Lübeck by way of Lübhenn in Mecklenburg in 1908. He married Caroline (also called Linchen) Cohn in Lübeck in 1909. She was born in Lübeck on 5 August 1887. Upon her marriage to Bruno she lost her Lübeck citizenship. Therefore, like her husband and later her children she was a stateless person. Her older sister, Emma, had already married Bruno's older brother, Max, in 1904.

In the Jewish community's registry of individuals one finds the following entry for the marriage of Bruno and Caroline Katz:



Entry by Rabbi Dr Salomon Carlbach about the marriage of Bruno and Caroline Katz [2]

Inscriptions at the Installation:

HIER WOHNTE
BRUNO KATZ
JG. 1880
DEPORTIERT 1941
ERMORDET IN
RIGA

HIER WOHNTE
CAROLINE KATZ
GEB. COHN
JG. 1887
DEPORTIERT 1941
ERMORDET IN
RIGA

installation
21 April 2010

Heute, Mittwoch den achtzehnten August Ein Tausend neun Hundert und neun ward von mir, dem unterzeichneten Rabbiner, nach jüdischem Gesetz, hier in Lübeck getraut der Schaulensterdekorateur

Bruno Katzenfuß genannt Katz,

wohnhaft hierselbst, geboren am 25.Dezember 1880 in Pr.Holland*), als Sohn des Klempnermeisters Joseph Katzenfuß und dessen Ehefrau Marie geborene Moses, mit der Jungfrau

Caroline Cohn,

wohnhaft hierselbst, geboren hierselbst am 5.August 1887, als Tochter des Handelsmannes Lazarus Selig Cohn und dessen Ehefrau Rosa geborene Hopp, nachdem die bürgerliche Trauung hierselbst am Tage zuvor unter No. 516 vollzogen worden war.

Dr. Carlebach, Rabbiner

Translation of the above entry:

Today, Wednesday, the eighteenth of August nineteen hundred and nine were the window dresser

Bruno Katzenfuß known as Katz

here resident, born on 25 December 1880 in Pr(eußisch) Holland*, the son of the master plumber, Joseph Katzenfuß and his wife, Marie, nee Moses, and the maiden

Caroline Cohn

here resident, born here on 5 August 1887, the daughter of the merchant Lazarus Selig Cohn and his wife, Rosa, nee Hopp, married by me, the undersigned Rabbi, according to Jewish Law, the day after their civil marriage (Register number 516) had been performed in this very city.

Dr. Carlebach, Rabbi *)

Translator's note: Pr(eußisch) Holland was a small town near Elbing in East Prussia. Today the town is called Paslek and is located in Poland's Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (Province).

The young married couple first had a flat at Beckergrube 61 and then in 1911 moved to Marlesgrube, first living at Marlesgrube 38 then in 1913 moving to Marlesgrube 48.

For many years one finds the following entry in the Lübecker address directory: "Katz, Bruno, decorator and sign painter, Marlesgrube 48, Wife, Caroline, clothing and foot ware, Marlesgrube 48".



Rosa Katz's birth announcement [3]

Their four children were born in Lübeck: Mirjam 1910, Werner Selig 1912, Josef 1916 and finally Rosa 1922. All four children grew up living on Marlesgrube. Other Jewish families, namely the Lexandroixitz, Morgensterns, Jurmanns and Langsners, lived in the immediate area and had children similar in age to the Katz.

In the beginning of the 1920's Bruno and Caroline Katz expanded their business on the ground floor of Marlesgrube 48 to include furniture. However the business went bankrupt in 1925.



Bankruptcy notice of 3 May 1925 [4]

Soon afterward in 1927 the family moved first to Reiherstieg 33 and then finally to Fischergrube 22 in December 1932. At that time Bruno Katz's occupation was listed in the address directory as

business manager.



Fischergrube 22 as seen in a 2010 photo [5]

After a visit to Lübeck at the end of the 1980's Bruno and Caroline's son, Josef, who was born in 1916, wrote about some of his memories, such as:

"My father took me out of school when I was 15. He placed me into a carpentry training course because it was his opinion, as the saying goes: Hand work lays the path with gold. At the time Palestine is being developed and your trade will serve you well. My father was far-sighted and already in 1931 he had decided that his four children had to leave Germany."

A carpenter in the Travelmannstraße, who himself was one of the first Nazis in Lübeck, took the young Josef on to train him. *"His only stipulation was, that I had to work for him for half the normal wage. After working for him for three years he paid me the full going wage. He was good to me and during the entire training time with him I never heard the word "Jude" (German for Jew). You have to understand how it was at that time, in order to understand what kind of a person he was. Because of his efforts I was even allowed to take the examination to become a journeyman. At home things were not that good for us. Therefore, I was lucky, that he hired me back as a journeyman."*

But in 1935 Josef was forced to leave the carpentry shop and therefore prepared himself to immigrate to Palestine by participation in a Hachschara, a Zionist immigration preparation course.

Josef Katz had a very close friend, Ursula, who herself was not a Jew. Secretly they would meet on the Untertrave (a street in Lübeck), in spite of all the risks if they were caught together. As it was one time after meeting with Ursula, Josef encountered a group of young men, who beat him up. Yet in spite his beating, he was, in the words of his father, *"still lucky."*

Even in her senior years Josef's former girl friend could remember saying goodbye to him in 1936 as she accompanied him to the train station and thereby he left Lübeck and his parents forever for Palestine. *"Once in Palestine I went to a Kibbutz and at the age of 20 it was the first time that I felt like I was a free man."*

In March 1939 his younger Sister Rosa spent some time at the Steckelsdorf Estate near Rathenow about 50 kms (30 miles) west of Berlin. At this time she was instructed on what it would be like to live and work in Palestine. After she completed her training she joined her brother in Palestine.

Werner Selig Katz followed in his father's footsteps and became a sign painter and emigrated to the United States in 1938. His older sister, Mirjam, and her husband, Kurt Fritz Vollmann, were also able to leave Germany in March of 1941, beginning a new life in New York City.

In a letter dated 22 August 1940 Bertha and Dora Lexandrowitz, one time neighbours on Marlesgrube, wrote to their relatives in Shanghai: *"Nathan Blumental left today for South America by way of Japan and Afrika. Sonja Carlebach left for New York via Yokohama and Miriam Vollmann will be leaving soon. She is really lucky, in that she was able to get married in a rush, otherwise they would have been like us, who are unable to take advantage of this way out."*

This short comment gives one an insight into the desperate efforts of many of the Jewish people in Lübeck to find a possible way to flee and the immense difficulties and the huge barriers people faced, for example fulfilling the strict immigration requirements of individual countries and the

considerable cost of the whole process, as well as the reducing number of possible escape routes. Because of her marriage Miriam Vollmann was no longer a stateless person and thereby she, along with her husband, was able to obtain the necessary travel permits. Shortly after their flight in March of 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union in the summer of the same year and the escape route they used was no longer available to those seeking to get out of Germany.

Surely Bruno and Caroline Katz also worked unceasingly to emigrate. In 1939 and 1940 those who were stateless were always under pressure from the Gestapo to leave Germany but since they were already older any possibility of fleeing was in the end unavailable to them.

Bruno Katz was 61 years old and his wife 54 when they received their evacuation notice. They, along with Caroline's sister, the then 61 year old Emma Katz, and her youngest son Josef were deported to Riga, Latvia on 6 December 1941. Josef volunteered to go with them on the train "to the east" in order to accompany his mother.

The Katz's flat at Fischergrube 22 was fumigated after their deportation. The company, which fumigated the flat, invoiced the Finance Department 72 Marks for the work.



A Kalck Company invoice from December 1941 to the Finance Department [6]

In 1945 Caroline and Bruno Katz's nephew, Josef Katz, wrote the book *Erinnerungen eines Überlebenden*. Unfortunately there is no English translation of his book but if it had been translated a possible title would be *Recollections of a Survivor*. This is a very important document dealing with the deportation of Jews to Riga, Latvia on 6 December 1941. Some of Josef's personal accounts deal with his aunt and uncle.

"50 kg (110 pounds) of luggage were allowed. My uncle had quickly bought a cast iron stove because he believed it would be very cold in the east. We also took our sewing machine with us. My mother thought she could earn some money with her sewing." (page 23)

Immediately upon arrival at the Skirotova train station near Riga Josef Katz was forcibly separated from his mother and relatives. He writes: *"In the meantime I gently have helped my mother down from the carriage steps and assisted her with her back pack. We stand in the middle of a mass of chaos. . . 'Hold onto tightly to my arm, Mum!' . . . 'Leave the suitcase here. It makes no sense at all to lug it any further.' Thus we are slowly pushed towards the platform's exit. We reach a vacant space in front of the buildings of the train station. Suddenly from one side of us a SS man bellows 'Come here!' I must leave my mother to make it on her own. Slowly she walks to be beside my uncle. It is a walk of indescribable distress."* (page 26 & 27)

His Aunt Linchen is the one who in a 22 January 1942 letter breaks the sad news to him that his mother had died.

"My dear Josef, Yesterday evening your dear mother died in the arms of Senior Rabbi Carlebach after suffering a stroke. She was still able to say 'Shmah Jisroe!' (Hear O Israel). She did not suffer. In the afternoon she suddenly became ill. A short time later she was dead. Carlebach said that she died a pious women. She is surely that. I am to greet you on behalf of all those here. Your dear Aunt Linchen." (page 42)

It is not known how Bruno and Linchen Katz lost their lives. If they had not already died during the winter months in the Jungfernhof Camp due to the cold, lack of food and all of the inhuman conditions at the camp, then it is possible that they were in one of the groups of people, who were taken to the Birkernieki Woods east of Riga in February and March of 1942 and shot there.

In the Hall of Names in Yad Vashern in Jerusalem two "Pages of Testimony" completed by their great-grandchildren memorialize Bruno and Caroline Katz.

Photo Credits

[1] Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte der Hansestadt Lübeck

[2] Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, Personenstandsregister der Jüdischen Gemeinde, Bd. 2 Eheschließungen

[3] Lübecker Generalanzeiger vom 16.7.1922

[4] Lübecker Generalanzeiger vom 3.5.1925

[5] Foto Heidemarie Kugler-Weimann, 2010

[6] aus Goldberg, Bettina / Paul, Gerhard, Matrosenanzug - Davidstern, Bilder jüdischen Lebens aus der Provinz, Neumünster 2002, S. 265

References in Addition to Standard Reference Materials:

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Heidemarie Kugler-Weimann, 2012

Translated by Glenn Sellick and Martin Harnisch 2012

