



Elsa Strauß and her son Walter lived at Adolfstraße 5a

From 1915 until 1941 Elsa Strauß and her son, Walter, lived in a small villa at Adolfstraße 5a.



Adolfstraße 5a. Picture by H.K-W 2010

Elsa Strauß, née Stern, was born in Gelnhausen (50km/30 miles east of Frankfurt am Main) on 10 April 1880. Her parents, Ferdinand Stern and Rebekka Stern, née Kohn, were married in Gelnhausen in 1868. Elsa had three brothers, Theo, Louis, and Max. Nothing is known about Elsa's childhood and youth or how she met her husband. On 10 March 1902 she married the salesman and factoryowner Nathan (also known as Natan) Strauß in Würzburg. Her husband was born in Barchfeld, Thüringen (190km/120 miles northeast of Frankfurt am Main) on 25 Juli 1867, making him 13 years older than her.

They lived in Chemnitz (90 km/55 miles southeast of Leipzig), where Nathan Strauß had been resident since 1889. Nathan's father, Isaak Heinemann Strauß, had died in Barchfeld in 1883. A few years after his father's death his mother, Babette Strauß (nee Stern) and sister, Thelma, moved to Chemnitz. In October 1893 Nathan Strauß along with his business partner, Nathan Stern, founded <s>the</s> N. Strauß & Co., a mechanized knitwear manufacturer. In May 1908 he received the membership of the "Sächsischer Untertanenverband" (Subjects of Saxony Association) and was thereby accorded full civil rights by the City of Chemnitz. As a factory owner he was also a member of the prestigious artistic association "Kunsthütte." The Strauß couple next lived at Schillerstraße 1 and later moved to a flat at Heinrich-Beck-Straße 7 in the popular Kaßberg section of the city.

On 9 December 1906 their daughter was stillborn and was buried in the Jewish cemetery without being named. Five years later on 28 May 1911 their son, Walter, was born.

The joy the couple experienced at the birth of their son lasted only a little over a year because Narthan Strauß died on 15 August 1912 at the age of 45. His brother-in-law, Louis Stern, registered the death with the proper authorities. Nathan Strauß was buried in the Chemnitz Jewish Cemetery.

Inscription at the installation:

HIER WOHNTE
ELSA STRAUSS
GEB. STERN
JG. 1880
DEPORTIERT 1941
ERMORDET IN
RIGA

HIER WOHNTE
WALTER STRAUSS
JG. 1911
AUF FLUCHT
NACH PALÄSTINA
UNTERGANG
DER MS „STRUMA“,
TOT 23.2.1942

installation
13 September 2011



Tombstone for Nathan Strauß at the Jewish Cemetery Chemnitz, picture by Heidemarie Kugler-Weimann 2013

As of April 1912 Elsa Straus had become her husband's company secretary, that is she had the power of attorney, since the other partner, Nathan Stern, had left the company already in 1902. In March of 1914 she gave up the power of attorney since she had been able to sell the business to the merchant Friedrich R. Voigt. The former family business then operated under the name of "Friedrich R. Voigt, formerly N. Strauß & Co." until 1922, when the new owner abandoned "formerly N. Strauß & Co." in the firm's name.

In June of 1915 Elsa Strauß, her son, Walter, as well as her parents moved from Chemnitz to Lübeck. In July 1904 her parents had moved from Würzburg to Chemnitz, where their daughter, Elsa, and son, Louis, had lived since 1902. Louis Stern attempted to make a living as a stocking and knit ware manufacturer but had little success. In January 1910 he moved to the neighbouring village of Freiberg and later to Dresden. Elsa Strauß's mother-in-law, Babette Stern, remained with her daughter Selma in Chemnitz until Selma's death in 1919. At that time Babette Stern moved to Frankfurt am Main.

Elsa's older brother, Dr. Max Stern, had lived in Lübeck since the turn of the century. He had been the owner of Chemische Fabrik Schlutup (Schlutup Chemical Plant) since 1907. He mainly produced fishmeal. Max Stern was married to Sofie, nee Marcus. Their daughter, Johanna, was born in 1910 which made her barely a year older than her cousin, Walter. Since 1912 the family of three lived in a villa at Roeckstraße 23, not far from Adolfstraße, where Elsa Strauß had purchased a home at Adolfstraße 5a for herself, and her son as well as her parents. Sofie Stern's parents, Max and Elise Marcus, also lived in the immediate area. They owned a villa at Israelsdorfer Allee 8 (later renamed Travemünder Allee 8). They moved to Lübeck from Schwaan (100 km/60 miles east of Lübeck) in the State of Mecklenburg in 1912 in order to be closer to their only child.



The building at Roeckstraße 23, which was owned by Elsa Strauß' brother, Dr. Max Stern.



The building at Travemünder Allee 8. This villa belonged to Max and Elise Marcus, the parents of Elsa Strauß' sister-in-law, Sofie Stern. Photo from the family's private collection.

During this time Elsa moved to Kiel. Her brother, Max Stern, had already volunteered to serve in the military and was stationed on the Western Front. While serving on the Western Front he was presented the certificate that he and his family had been granted Lübeck City citizenship.



Naturalization Certificate for the Stern Family by the Free and Hanseatic City of Lübeck. In the collection of Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, Stadt- und Landamt, Anlagen zum Erwerb der Staatsangehörigkeit 340/1917



Dr. Max Stern while serving as a volunteer in the First World War. From the family's private collection.

During his absence his wife, Sofie, ran the plant, so Johanna was taken care of by relatives. Walter and Johanna were like brother and sister as they grew up and as adults they continued to have a very good relationship. Johanna attended the Ernestinen School starting in 1916 and Walter started attending the Johanneum School in 1917. Photos reveal how compatible the families were.



Johanna with Rebecca and Fedinand Stern. From the Family's Collection.



Dr. Max Stern, Johanna, Sofie Stern, Rebecca and Ferdinand Stern. From the family's collection.

After being in Lübeck for only a few years, both of Elsa's parents died, Rebecca Stern in 1920 at the age of 77 and Ferdinand Stern in 1921 at the age of 78. Their Last Will and Testament bequeathed their estate equally to their four children. But Max Stern, his brothers, Louis and Theodor, as well as all their children waived their rights to the bequests in favour of Elsa Strauß receiving the entire estate, a clear indication of their mutual affection and care for one another.



Notice of Ferdinand Stern's Death in the 7 December 1921 Lübeck General-Anzeiger, First Insertion, Page 1, Section AHL, County Courthouse, Testament 35/1921, Strauß

Ferdinand Stern was cremated (it can be said with certainty at his request) and the cremains were interned at the city's Vorwerker Cemetery. His death was also not recorded in the Israeli Congregation's registry, while his wife's death was duly registered.

The 1927 membership list of the Israeli Women's Organization has listed "Mrs. Max Marus" and

“Mrs. Dr. Stern” as well as “Mrs. Elsa Strauß” as members, which indicates the family’s involvement in the congregation.

Dr. Max Stern was a long time member of the “Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft”*) (Society for the Furtherance of Charitable Activities), which is a plain indication of his involvement in Lübeck’s middle-class. It can be said that he had successfully assimilated into German society since he received the honour of being appointed the Counsel to Lithuania.

*)Translator’s note:

Gesellschaft zur Beförderung gemeinnütziger Tätigkeit

The *Gesellschaft zur Beförderung gemeinnütziger Tätigkeit* ("Society for the Furtherance of Charitable Activities") is [Lübeck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%BCbeck) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%BCbeck>'s oldest charitable organization http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charitable_organization, founded in 1789, its name is often abbreviated as the *Gemeinnützige*.

The democratically structured and middle class society and its social house (from 1826 at the address Breite Strasse 33, and from 1891 at Königstrasse 5) rapidly became the centre of practical reform work in the spirit of the Enlightenment. The company (society) was involved in the improvement of conditions in many areas of life; for example, it established a River Lifesavers Institute. It ran the *Sparkasse zu Lübeck*, a credit union, and up to 1934 the Museum of Art and Cultural History. In 1938 their concert, theatre and lecture hall, the [Kolosseum](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kolosseum&action=edit&redlink=1) <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kolosseum&action=edit&redlink=1>, was moved to the Kronsfordter Allee. (from [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia>, the [free](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_content) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_content encyclopedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia>)

Over the years the plant in Schlutup had increased in size to such a point that it had its own railroad siding. On 1 November 1928 the plant celebrated its 30 years in business and its 25th year of ownership by Dr. Max Stern. The company’s secretary/lawyer put together a hand written album of the firm’s history for the “boss”. He closed the album with the hope, that at the 50th Anniversary of Dr. Max Stern ownership of the firm “it may be granted” that the plant would be even larger. Yet at the same time in the beginning of 1928 another event made the firm and the family extremely anxious. The Lübeck master cooper Holst pressed charges against Dr. Stern. In his brief he charged that in 1927 he had to take 79 barrels to four different garbage dumps and without informing the authorities emptied their contents of red phosphoric acid which was also contaminated with arsenic. The charge was dismissed but not an additional charge for damages brought by the Lübecker Senate. Therefore, well testing was conducted by the health department until 1937, with all test results being negative. The national press dramatically overplayed the “Poison Scandal” in part with an anti-Semitic slant.

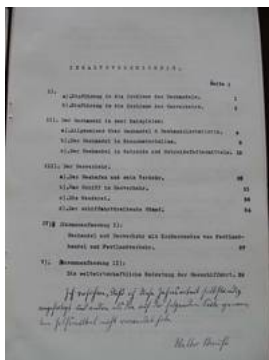
Apparently extended members of the family attempted to help with the resulting financial difficulties, since in 1928 both Elsa Strauß and Max Marcus took out loans on their properties. Yet in spite of all these efforts the Schlutup Chemical Plant had to declare bankruptcy in 1931. Starting in 1932 the plant was reopened with Sofie Stern as the owner. During this time Dr. Max Stern resigned from his position as Consul to Lithuania.

Johanna stopped her studies in law at Heidelberg and returned to Lübeck. She then took a course in commerce and afterwards worked as a clerk first in the Globus department store then with Lubeca. It was here she was laid off due to her Jewish background. Johanna Stern then went to Hamburg and worked six weeks on a poultry farm, and at the same time completed a practical vocational training programme in agriculture. Finally, she took further domestic vocational training in the Ahava Orphanage in Berlin in preparing to go to Palestine. In October 1934 she was able to leave Germany, emigrating to Palestine.



Johanna Stern and Walter Strauß. From the family's private collection

In 1929 Walter Strauß passed his final secondary school exam, just as his cousin, Johanna, had done earlier. In the documents of the Johanneum High School in the Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck (Lübeck Archives) one finds not only his grades/marks, but also some individual examination essays as well the essay “Maritime Trade and Commerce with Special Consideration in Regards to Germany”, which he was given a year to complete.

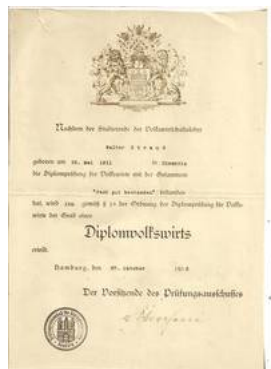


- Gliederung der Jahresarbeit von Walter Strauß, AHL, Schulen, Johanneum (Outline of Walter Strauß' Essay “Maritime Trade and Commerce with Special Consideration in Regards to Germany.” Lübeck Archives, Schools, Johanneum)



-Reifezeugnis von Walter Strauß, Vor- und Rückseite, AHL, Schulen, Johanneum (Front and Back Copy of Walter Strauß' Certificate of Completion of Secondary Education, Lübeck Archives, Schools, Johanneum)

After completing secondary school Walter Strauß attended the University of Hamburg studying economics, receiving his degree in 1932.



Walter Strauß' University Diploma as an economist. From the family's private collection.



Elsa und Walter Strauß,
from the family's private
collection.

While Walter Strauß attended university he also worked at the firm of Dyckerhoff & Neumann. He first worked from April until October 1931 at the firm's main office in Wetzlar and then in Hamburg at the branch in Altona-Bahrenfeld. In March of 1932 he changed his registered address from Lübeck to Altona-Bahrenfeld "with no further specifics". He worked for the firm as an economist until 1936.



Letter of Reference from
the Firm of Dyckerhoff &
Neumann. From the
family's private collection.

In 1936 Dr. Walter Strauß was newly employed by a Dutch bank, the N.V. Eng.Holl. Bank. He worked as an auditor from 1936 to 1940 at the Cauciucul Quadrat S.A.I. R., a manufacturer of rubber goods in Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. It was a subsidiary of the Baltic India Rubber Co. Quadrat, Riga, administered by the Engelsch-Hollandsche Trust Company. During this time he was thereby out of Nazi Germany. According to his letter of reference from the company the cooperative work with this Romanian company ended in 1940 and therefore he was laid off.



Letter of Reference from
the N.V.Eng.Holl. Bank,
Den Haag, 1940. From the
family's private collection.

The events of the war forced Walter Strauß to try to flee Romania since in the mean time the situation for the Jewish minority in Romania had become dramatically worse. In the fall of 1941 all Jews from 18 to 50 years of age were pressed into being forced labourers. In turn, it became

very risky to flee the country unless one had money. So it was that Walter Strauß was able to pay a large amount of money, as did 769 other Jewish refugees, and board the freighter "Struma" bound for Palestine.

On 12 December 1941 the Panama flagged ship „Struma“ left the Coustanza harbour with many more people on board than was authorized. Each person could take 20 kg of luggage, much of which was confiscated while going through customs. The first stage of the sailing was by way of the Black Sea to Istanbul but it took four days due to mechanical problems. There all the refugees, with only a few exceptions, had to remain on board and the promised visas for Palestine were not there. Then the ship was not allowed to proceed. After weeks of waiting the Turkish authorities permitted the crippled ship to be towed back into the Black Sea on 24 February 1942. On the same day the ship was attacked by a Soviet submarine and sank. When the ship sank Walter Strauß lost his life at sea as well as did all but one of his fellow refugees.

It is possible that his mother was still alive at the time of his death but living under horrible conditions in the Jungfernhof Camp in Riga, Latvia. Elsa Strauß had decided not to flee Germany and so remained in Lübeck with the hope that nothing worse would happen. She was listed in the 1930's Lübecker address book as the owner of a guest-house and living in her home at Adolfstraße 5a.

Dr. Max Stern and his wife, Sofie, had to sell their house on Roeckstraße in 1933, moving to a ground floor apartment/flat at Hindenburgplatz 1. Their landlord was Fritz Lissauer, a Jewish salesman. Already in 1931 Sofie's parents had moved in with them, possibly so that they raise more money by renting out the apartments in their villa. The elderly Max Marcus, who received a good pension, even tried to take up his old profession as a dealer and trader in fabrics.

Elise Marcus had already died in 1932 at the age of 68 while still living at Roeckstraße 23. Max Marcus died in February 1935 at the age of 79 at the Hindenburgplatz residence. Following his death Sofie and Max Stern inherited the villa at Travemünder Allee 8 and they moved into the ground floor apartment in January 1937 after Fritz Lissauer had emigrated to Denmark.

Throughout 1935 there appeared advertisements in the Lübecker Newspapers calling for the public boycott of Jewish shops, firms and individuals, which were then listed. The boycott notice listing Dr. Max Stern was indicated thus: "Hindenburgplatz 1, Fish Meal, Chemicals, Fabric for Clothing".

Max and Sofie Stern also intensified their attempts to leave Germany and finally in 1938 they received an Immigration Visa for Palestine and were able to join their daughter there.

Before this Max Stern not only had to deal with the Aryanization Sale of the house at Travemünder Alle 8 but also the building at Adolfstraße 5a. His sister, Elsa Strauß, sold the property to the pub owner, Westfehling, and was allowed to live in a ground floor room, measuring 32 square meters/345 square feet. She sent her valuables to her son in Romania with everything else having to go to the Regional Financial Management Office in Rostock.

Beside the many other anti-Jewish decrees and measures of the regime Elsa Strauß was forced to add the required Jewish first name of "Sara" to her name, and sew onto her clothing the Yellow Star, which had to be easily visible. It is hard to imagine, how she was able to support herself.

In the fall of 1941 she received her "evacuation order" to "a work assignment in the east." She was allowed to take 50 kg/110 pounds of luggage and along with 90 other people was ordered on 4 December 1941 to report to St.-Annen-Straße 11, which was the assembly area located at the Jewish community's former nursing home, together with about 90 other people. On 6 December buses drove the seniors and quite a number of children to the train station and from there they were placed in carriages/passenger cars. The train then brought them to the Bad Oldesloe marshalling yard. There the carriages/passenger cars were coupled to other carriages/passenger cars from Hamburg and other places in Schleswig-Holstein. The so called "Hamburg Transport" transported some 1,000 people to the east. After traveling for three days the train arrived at the Skirotova Train Station in Riga, Latvia. They then had to walk on foot through the snow to the Jungfernhof Camp, a former estate on the Daugava River. Several thousand people were housed in the most pitiful conditions in the camp. During the months of December to February many of the elderly and children died due to starvation, lack of water, the extremely cold winter and the general lack of their basic physical needs. The frost was so deep that the dead could not be buried so they piled up the bodies like firewood.

In the camp's files on the "Dünamünde Transport" it was recorded how Elsa Strauß died. On 26 March 1942 the interned people of the Jungfernhof Camp were given the chance to volunteer for work in a fish plant in Dünamünde. Trucks were used to transport the many, many volunteers, who had no idea that such a place did not exist. Instead they were taken to the Bikerneaki Forest, where they were all shot. It is almost certain that she never learned that her son had drowned the month before she was shot. After the War Elsa Strauß was declared dead by the courts.

In the Bikernieki Forest there is a memorial for the many thousands of people, who were

murdered there.



The Bikernieki Forest Memorial taken in the spring of 2010. H.K-W.

Just as Elsa Strauß was a victim of the Shoa so also was her sister-in-law. During this time her brother, Theodor, and his wife, Carla, were successful in fleeing to England, Louis Stern and his wife fled to Czechoslovakia, where Louis died of a brain aneurism in 1937. His wife was later deported and murdered. Their son, Michael Stern, was able to emigrate to Palestine.

In 1988 Johanna Hartogsohn, née Stern, came to visit Lübeck at the invitation of the State Government and was received at the City Hall by the then serving Senator Lund.



Lübecker Nachrichten 24 August 1988

In 2010 her son, Yoram Hartogsohn, and his two daughters and son came to Lübeck for a personal visit and were received by the present City Council Chair Gabriele Schopenhauer in the Audience Hall at City Hall.



Yoram Hartogsohn with his son, Ido, and daughter, Yael, at the Archives of the Hanseatic City of Lübeck.

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