

The Jewish Community of Laupheim and its Annihilation

Book Pages 350 - 353

LEWIN, Bella,

34 Kapellenstrasse

Translation by: Clara Steiner-Jay

DR . ANTJE KÖHLERSCHMIDT

[**Leo Lewin**, born 22. 10. 1882, Schwetz a. d. Weichsel, Bez. Graudenz, died in combat 9. 10. 1915 near Ypern/Belgium], OO

Bella Lewin, née Hirschfeld, born 29. 12. 1889 in Laupheim, emigrated on 1. 8. 1941 to New York, USA, died in 1964.

– **Lothar Lewin**, born 27. 2. 1915 in Stuttgart-Feuerbach, died in 1998.

„My mother Bella Lewin, née Hirschfeld, was a war widow. Born in 1889 in Laupheim, she came with me to the United States in August 1941. She earned her living as a nurse for infants. She died in 1964.“

The matter-of-fact and short summary of Lothar Lewin about his mother's life story, which were printed in the book „Lebenszeichen. Juden aus Württemberg nach 1933“ (Signs of Life, Jews from Württemberg after 1933), are an important trace of her life. It is thanks to this book that was published in 1982 in Gerlingen that some life stories of emigrated Laupheimer Jews have been handed down by the emigrants themselves. The book was created thanks to the initiative of Walter Strauss, the president of the Jews from Württemberg in New York, who asked emigrated Württemberger Jews that he knew to document their personal stories for their children and grandchildren so that they would know where they came from. The printing was supported by the government of the state of Baden-Württemberg.



*Bella Lewin in her early fifties.
(State archive Sigmaringen)*

Bella Lewin was born on December 29, 1889 in Laupheim as the second and youngest daughter of Leopold Hirschfeld (1849–1905) and Pauline, née Heilbronner (1859–1932). Her sister Laura Hirschfeld who was 2 years older married Siegfried Kurz, and her life history has been portrayed in a previous article. The sisters' parents ran a cigar store in the Kapellenstraße 34 under the name of Leopold Hirschfeld & Co., which was later taken over by their son-in-law Siegfried Kurz.

Not much is known about the life of Bella Lewin, and the only picture of her is in the documents of the state archive Sigmaringen. On July 30, 1912 she married Leo Lewin in Laupheim, who was born on October 20, 1882 in Schwetz a. d. Weichsel, Bez. Graudenz. The marriage didn't last long, since two years later, on November 5, 1914, Leo Lewin joined the reserve infantry regiment Nr. 120 in Stuttgart as a reservist and fought as a German soldier in World War 1. His wife Bella Lewin was very

pregnant at this time, and the couple's only son, Lothar Lewin, was born on February 27, 1915 in Feuerbach. It can be assumed that Leo Lewin received "vacation from the front" (Fronturlaub) for the birth of his son. But the young father already died in combat on October 9, 1915 near Ypern in the province of Westflandern in Belgium. The town of Ypern was severely battled during several battles with high loss of life during World War I. In the second battle of Flandern from April 22 until May 25, 1915 Ypern could not be taken over by the Germans which led to an occupation during the battle, in the course of which Leo Lewin lost his life.

Leo Lewin's personal data can be found in the "Verzeichnis von Kriegsteilnehmern der israelitischen Gemeinde Laupheim" (Directory of war participants from the Israelite community of Laupheim), which was started by Jonas Weil in 1919. There are records of 82 men from the Jewish community. Nine of them, which amounts to 11 percent, lost their life for the German fatherland. One of them was Leo Lewin. In this context it appears somewhat unusual that he was entered in the book, since he and his wife didn't live in Laupheim. This is also confirmed by the birthplace of their son, namely Stuttgart-Feuerbach. After the death of her husband Bella Lewin moved back to her family in Laupheim in 1916, her mother Pauline Hirschfeld and the family of her sister Laura Kurz. Her addresses for the following years are Bella's parents' house in the Kapellenstraße 33, but in the Laupheim address book from 1925 it is Judenberg 26, and in the Laupheim address book from 1938 her address is listed as Kapellenstraße 1. Bella Lewin's return with her son Lothar may have led to the entry of Leo Lewin in the above-mentioned directory.

Only a few traces of their life in Laupheim were found. The only photograph of Lothar Lewin dates from his school days. On the picture of the harmonica orchestra of the Realschule (middle school) from 1928 the fiendly looking 13-year-old boy is seated in the center of the first row.

In addition to a number of Christian fellow pupils there were among others Ernst Levy and Betty Wallach who like him were born in 1915.

From his membership in the orchestra it can be concluded, that he was a pupil of the Realschule in Laupheim. Before that he must have attended the Jewish elementary school in the Radstraße from 1922 to 1926 After graduating from the Realschule he went through a merchant apprenticeship and as a 19-year-old moved to Stuttgart in 1934, nothing else is known about it. The contact with Laupheim certainly remained since his mother continued to live there.

On July 30, 1941 Bella and Lothar Lewin emigrated to the USA. They were successful in doing this literally at the last moment, since a decree was issued by the security office of the Reich (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) on October 23, 1941 ordering to prevent the emigration of Jews with immediate effect. This was followed by the first deportations to the east in



November 1941 and finally the systematic murder of the German and European Jews.

Picture of the harmonica orchestra of the Realschule Laupheim 1928,

bottom row from left.: Bernhard Kästle, Lothar Lewin, Burkert.

The close circumstances of their emigration, which in 1941 was extremely difficult and rare, are unknown. It is likely that the nephew of Bella and the cousin of Lothar Lewin, Rudolf Kurz, must have helped them. He had emigrated to the USA in 1940. Bella's sister Laura Kurz, her brother-in-law Rubin and sister-in-law Melanie Schwarz, née Kurz, remained in Laupheim. They most certainly had also tried to emigrate. How and why it failed for them in the end, is as difficult to trace today as is the success in other cases. As reported in a previous article they became victims of the Shoa.

The following letter gives an impression of how after the merciless expulsion and systematic violent annihilation of the Jewish population of Germany, the national socialist system created its own laws in order to take over the estate of the victims – no matter how small.

The main finance office of Württemberg wrote in a letter from June 8, 1944 to the finance office in Biberach:

„Lothar Israel Lewin, born on February 27, 1915, and Bella Sara Lewin, born on December 29, 1889, both living in Laupheim, Kapellenstraße 33, emigrated on July 30, 1941 to America. Their assets have been handed over to the Reich, according to a message of the Gestapo office in Stuttgart from April 24, 1943. I have used the household goods stored at Adolf Epting GmbH in Stuttgart, consisting of 2 suitcases and their content for the supply of those that have suffered losses due to air attacks (Fliegergeschädigten). The total proceeds amount to 428.15 RM. I have instructed the Oberfinanzkasse to transfer this amount to you and

am requesting that all the necessary steps should be taken to account for this amount."

(Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen Wü 126/2 Nr.7)

At the end of this article we will let Lothar Lewin speak one more time, who described his life as follows:

„I, Lothar Lewin, was born in 1915 in Stuttgart-Feuerbach. In 1941 I emigrated to the USA. In 1943 I married Susi Weil. My wife's mother was Rosa Weil, née Marx, born in 1884. She was also a widow and lived in Buchau on the Federsee. At the end of 1941 she was transported to Riga from where she didn't return. My daughter Linda was born in 1950; she is married and lives in Leonia, New Jersey.

From 1943 to 1946 I served in the US Army (in the South Pacific). In 1952 I joined Interstate Chemical Corp in Fort Lee, N.J. as a sales director and later was Executive Vice Präsident of the same company until 1978. I have been active in the community of Ohav Sholaum, Washington Heights, for the last 12 years as the president of the Mens' Club."

The announcement in the journal „Aufbau", which was published in New York as the paper of the Jewish emigres, announced the death of Lothar Lewin on 4. December 1998. Of note is the addition under the name of the deceased „formerly Laupheim", („ehemals Laupheim"), which shows the connection with his former home community until his death.

We deeply mourn the passing of our beloved
husband, devoted father, father-in-law and grandfather

LOTHAR LEWIN
(formerly Laupheim)

His memory will continue to live on
in our hearts.

Susi Lewin, née Weil
Linda and Leslie Klein
Karen and Michael

680 West 204th Street
New York, NY 10034

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