

This manuscript has been handed down to me, and probably comes from the two addresses by David Spector of Hove, Sussex, and published by the [Jewish Historical Society of England](#) in their publications Transactions, Vol 22 (1968/9) "The Jews of Brighton" and Vol 30 (1987/8) "Brighton Jewry reconsidered". Inter alia it traces the arrival in Australia of Abraham Cohen back to Don Menachen ben Chajim Ha-Kohen (1650-1723) and the Konstamm family.

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Foreword

This compilation traces the members of the Kohnstamm family from their ancestor Don Menachen ben Chajim Ha-Kohen (1650-1723) to the present day. It includes the list of names of some 3500 members and their spouses, together with their dates and places of birth, marriage and death, and a brief indication of occupation or profession.

Since a bare list of names and dates does not make for compelling, reading the list is followed by brief biographical notes. The intention has been to say a few words about peoples' education, career and special interests. Inevitably the quality of the information gathered for this purpose has varied considerably, and this accounts for the lack of uniformity in the presentation of individual cases. Moreover, it was found easier to obtain information about men than about women, especially unfortunate in cases where the woman is the member of the family and the man is the spouse who has married into it. In order to save space the text does not include many dates, for details of which reference should be made to the list of names.

The basis of this family history was a manuscript family tree provided by Karl Kohnstamm (KB.411.6). The tree, whose author is not known, does not include any documentary references. The conflicts presented by the uncorroborated vital dates of the ancestors do not appear to have been noticed by any family member who held copies. Fortunately we were able to rely on the records in the Bavarian state archives at Wiirzburg, and elsewhere for much of the data about the earlier generations of the family. For more recent events direct contact with family members, much correspondence and a great deal of telephoning contributed to the material herein.

Records of births, marriages and deaths in the Jewish population, known as Juden-Matrikel (Jews' registers), were introduced in Germany as part of the process of emancipation. Subject to local legislation, which varied in the numerous sovereign territories existing before the establishment of the German empire in 1871, they were generally kept by the local Catholic or Protestant priests and usually cover the period from about 1812 to 1875. This system was superseded by the introduction of general registration throughout the German empire on 1 January 1876.

It is not possible in a genealogical work of this kind to reach perfection. Some gaps are bound to remain unfilled, be it because of a lack of records for earlier years or the inability to find contacts able and willing to provide the required information. Much necessarily depended on records up to 200 years old, which are not always reliable or were incapable of verification. Family events have been recorded up to 31 December 2000. Subsequent births, marriages and deaths, which have been notified, are shown under the heading 'Twenty-first Century Additions' with space provided for readers themselves to add new information.

Despite efforts made when finalizing the work to verify the material obtained over many years, there may be instances where the information given may not be entirely up to date. Indeed, unless one or more members of the family maintain the contacts established in the preparation of this work and update them from time to time it will remain the historical record of the state of the family at the end of the twentieth century, rather than the story of a living, and vibrant family.

Future readers of these notes may feel that the references to the Holocaust are excessive. No excuse is made for this. This story very largely deals with family members' lives during the twentieth century. Not only was the Holocaust that century's most dreadful event, but also was aggravated by the fact that the murder of millions of people occurred as part of government policy and was carried out as a matter of bureaucratic routine. Moreover, a large proportion of the members of the family lived in Germany in the 1930s and in German occupied territories during World War 11, or, if living; outside, had been born. in

Germany. Thus the Holocaust affected, directly or indirectly, virtually every one of its widespread branches. It is estimated that 270 members of the family lived in Germany during the 1930s and many were able to emigrate to other countries. Of those unable to do so in time 52, almost one in five, are recorded to have perished in concentration camps, and more were at one time or another arrested or held in camps. To honour their memory a list of their names follows this foreword. A number of family members, who had Christian spouses or were descended from mixed Jewish and Christian marriages, managed to survive the war in Germany or German occupied countries. Several of them suffered from persecution, some having had to go into hiding.

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Rath, the third secretary, who happened to receive him. The event was used by the government to organize the most brutal and comprehensive pogrom against Jews during the night of 9/10 November which has come to be known as Kristallnacht (Crystal night). Throughout Germany remaining, Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues were burned and destroyed. Jews were savagely beaten, about 100 000(?) were murdered and 26 000 were carried off into concentration camps. It was the beginning of the Holocaust.

Niederwerrn

The Kohnstamm family lived in the village of Niederwerrn, nowadays a small town on the outskirts of the city of Schweinfurt. While Schweinfurt had since the fourteenth century enjoyed the privileges of a free imperial city, which included the *Judenregal*, the village of Niederwerrn was part of the tiny territory of the Barons of Münster, who held it since 1420 as the feudal vassals of the bishops of Würzburg.

It is not known when Jews first came to reside at Niederwerrn, but it is unlikely to have been before 1500. The first record dates from 1657. However, there was a Jewish community at Schweinfurt as early as the first half of the thirteenth century. Large enough to have maintained a synagogue and cemetery it existed, with interruptions when Jews were expelled and subsequently readmitted, until 1555. At that time, following heavy damage to Schweinfurt during the so-called Margraves' War (Margi Krieg), Jews were again expelled and none allowed to return until early in the nineteenth century. Many of them are believed to have moved into the surrounding villages, including, Niederwerrn, where they either augmented an existing small community or founded a new one. The Barons of Münster valued them for the financial advantages they brought to the area.

In August 1802, shortly before the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, the electorate of Bavaria, by the grace of Napoleon soon to be raised to the rank of a kingdom, occupied much of Franconia including, Schweinfurt and Niederwerrn. The acquisition was confirmed later that year and since the area has remained with Bavaria, except for the period of 1810-1814, when it was part of the short-lived grand duchy of Würzburg. Bavaria is now a *land* of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Having been summarily expelled in 1553 there were very few Jews living in Bavaria at the time of its acquisition of Franconia. The small numbers remaining, were tolerated by special licence or as factors serving the electors' financial needs. In 1726 the reigning elector owed them over five million guilders, a very substantial sum indicative of their value to him. The gain of Franconia thus gave rise to a substantial increase in the number of Jews in the new kingdom. It follows that the members of the Kohnstamm, family, residing in the early part of the nineteenth century in Niederwerrn and Franconian villages recently acquired by Bavaria, became subject to the Bavarian Royal Ordinance of 10 June 1813, known as the Judenedikt ('the Jews' ordinance'). This emancipatory edict followed similar legislation that had already been promulgated in Austria in 1781, in France in 1791, in French occupied or controlled German areas between 1797 and 1808, and in Prussia in 1812. The ordinance permitted the free pursuit of the Jewish religion, and Jewish communities obtained the same rights as other religious bodies. It formalized various existing regulations concerning, Jews and established the principle of civil rights, but without conferring complete equality. It included the three conditions referred to above and replaced the former letters of protection (Schutzbriefe) by new registers (Matrikel). These provided for the registration of Jewish births, marriages and deaths by the local priest but also served to restrict their freedom of movement, closely controlled, and in some cases reduced, the number of Jews living in any locality and limited the number of marriages. In some country areas such as Franconia, which had become part of Bavaria only a short time previously, the ordinance worsened rather than improved, Jewish civil rights.

For many years after its issue efforts by and on behalf of the Jews to improve the terms of the Judenedikt

remained ineffective. The new constitution of 1818 still did not accord them full civil except in the territories on the left bank of the Rhine, where they continued to enjoy the more liberal rights acquired in 1797 during the French occupation. It was only in 1872 that the constitution of the reunified German empire, of which Bavaria became part, conferred complete equality before the law throughout Germany.

On the economic side opportunities for Jews improved somewhat as a result of the *Judenedikt*.. Cities were now prepared to receive them, but in the country districts change was slow in coming. As a result there was throughout the nineteenth century a movement of Jews leaving the countryside to find a wider scope and greater freedom of choice for their ambitions in cities, such as Munich, Nuremberg, Bamber

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or Würzburg or outside Bavaria in Frankfurt. Moreover, only the eldest son could inherit the rights conferred by registration under the Matrikel system. Thus, younger sons desirous of creating an independent home and business contributed to the number of emigrants. Bavaria is believed to have lost some 11,000 of the younger and more enterprising men between 1830 and 1855, including several members of the Kohnstamm family, who went abroad, mainly to North America.

The population table below shows the former substantial proportion of Jews living in Niederwerrn illustrates the movement away from the middle of the nineteenth century, which is typical for villages in Franconia. The last two Kohnstamms to spend their lives in Niederwerrn were Hirsh Haimann (KB.416) and Victor (KB.418), who died there in 1895 and 1882, respectively. Today's population of Niederwerrn, which since 1978 includes the neighbouring village of Oberwerrn, is over 8,000, but includes no Jews.

The former community's synagogue was built in 1786 to replace a smaller previous one and renovated in 1885 and 1913. Its interior was badly damaged at the time of *Kristallnacht* on 9 November 1938. Its Torah rolls and other ritual equipment were set on fire and destroyed. However, the local fire brigade assisted in extinguishing the fire in order to prevent its spread to neighbouring houses. The building, displaying a memorial plaque to the former Jewish community, is still standing and has since been used as a cinema and a factory storage hall. It is now being renovated and will in future accommodate the local public library.

The community also owned a substantial school building, put up in 1829 and rebuilt in 1878. In 1850 the school had 54 pupils, a number which reduced steadily till none were left in the 1930s. The building, included a ritual bath (Mikvah) and provided accommodation for the schoolmaster, who was also the local cantor. In 1939 the community was required to sell both the synagogue and community building at far below their true value. Both now belong to the village, the latter, extended with an annex, serving as the town hall. Here, too, a memorial plaque indicates the building's former use as a Jewish school.

There are also still a number of houses in which Kohnstamm families used to live. On some of them grooves can be seen in the door frames, which held mezuzahs in the days of long ago.

The Niederwerrn community used to bury their dead at nearby Euerbach. That village, too, was part of the barons of Münster's domains. The record of the sale of the land in 1672 by its proprietor, one Adam Ulrich von Steinau, for the use in perpetuity for the burial of the dead of the Jewish communities of the surrounding villages, can be found in the Münster archives at Würzburg. It confirms that already at that early date a sufficient number of Jews lived in the area to warrant this purchase. Like most Jewish cemeteries in Germany the Euerbach cemetery was desecrated during the Nazi period and the gravestones overturned. They were re-erected in random order after the war, but some Kohnstamm memorials can still be identified. However, the one of the earliest ancestor of the family is not among them.

Table of the Population of Niederwerrn

	c1800	1867	1900	1913	1925	1933	1942	1999
Total number of inhabitants	646	678	740	773	853	1057	1706	8458#
Number of Jews included	237	207	140	90	51	45	9*	0
Percentage of Jews	36.7	30.5	18.9	11.6	6.0	4.3	0.5	0

* deported during 1942 # including Oberwerrn

The Family Name

Before their emancipation, which began towards the end of the eighteenth century and received its great impetus through the French revolution, Jews in Germany did not in general have fixed surnames, but used patronymics, and occasionally matronymics, which changed from generation to generation. Our subject family lived in the village of Niederwerrn, which in 1814 was absorbed in the Kingdom of Bavaria, whose Jews were subject to the Royal Ordinance of 10 June 1813, generally known as the Jews' Ordinance (*Judenedikt*). It regulated their status and provided a measure of emancipation for them. The ordinance included the requirement to adopt permanent family names and the establishment of Jewish registers of birth, marriage and death. These were kept by the local Catholic priest until the newly formed German empire introduced general registration on 1 January 1876, which covered vital events irrespective of religion.

The earliest entries in the Niederwerrn registers of birth include those of the children of Mendel and Gella (KB.41) between 1813 and 1822. In the first entry in February 1813, before the promulgation the Jews' Ordinance already referred to, and up to 1816, the father is entered as Mendel Cohn or Kohn. From 1818 onward he is registered as Mendel or Mendel Maier Kohnstamm. The mother's name is given as Gella Kohn, which must have been her maiden name; quite likely she was a relative, but there are no records to confirm this surmise. In some early birth registers the family name is written with an initial C instead of K, a not uncommon practice in Germany until the early part of the twentieth century for the representation of the guttural sound. Since then the letter K has been standardized to represent this sound.

The family considered themselves Kohanim, i.e. members of the Jewish priestly tribe, descended from Aron, the brother of Moses, and therefore added 'Ha-Kohen' to their patronymics. Kohnstamm was thus an exact German translation of their former practice. The adoption of family names was a matter of formal registration by the heads of the families concerned. For the Kohnstamm family that record has not yet been found in the Bavarian state archives, nor is it known why the family chose that name rather than the far more common Kohn or Cohen. From the evidence in the registers of birth it would seem that the name was adopted some time between 1816 and 1818. In the case of daughters of the family, who were born and married before the time of the adoption of the new family name, their maiden name is herein shown thus: [Kohnstamm], to indicate that this would have been their maiden name, had they married later.

Over the years the name Kohnstamm has been subject to variations in spelling. The earliest was the omission of the second m at the end of the name by some of the descendants of Salomon Kohnstamm (KBA 1). This may originally have been due either to the German practice of writing m with a bar above it as a space-saving alternative to writing mm, or just an error or carelessness on the part of a registration official. As part of the process of assimilation, or merely to hide their origins, some members of the family in Anglo-Saxon countries simplified the spelling of their name to Constam or Konstam. The former was adopted by Emil Kohnstamm (KB.412.1), an American citizen by birth, but living in Switzerland. He obtained a declaration from the Court of Common Pleas for the City and County of New York, dated 15 July 1880, allowing the change of spelling. Thus originated the name borne to this day by all his descendants, most of whom live in Switzerland.

The earliest record of the latter spelling dates from 1894 when Edwin Max Kohnstamm (KB.415.5) is thus shown as one of the editors of Rydce & Konstam, an English standard legal work dealing with rating appeals. Edwin was the only son of Haimann Kohnstamm (KB.415), founder of a leather business in London, which after his death devolved on his nephews, Rudolph (KB.417.5) and Alfred (KB.417.7). The new style of the firm, R. & A. Kohnstamm, retained the original spelling, as did Haimann, Rudolph and Alfred throughout their lives, as well as Norman and Jack, Rudolph's two elder sons, who died

serving as officers in the British army in World War 1. Rudolph's youngest and only surviving son, Geoffrey, adopted the Konstam spelling about 1919, when he was a medical student, and it has so continued in his family. Alfred had no sons, but Phyllis, his actress daughter, used her maiden name in its anglicized form professionally. In *A Mixed Double*, the joint autobiography with her husband, the tennis player Bunny Austin, she applied that spelling also to her forebears, notwithstanding the fact that they are not known to have used it. Geoffrey persuaded his cousins Peter (KB.417.63) and Werner Kohnstamm (KB.417.64), also to adopt the Konstam spelling when they came to England from Nazi Germany during the 1930s. Kenneth (KA.333.2), the internationally known bridge player adopted the same spelling which continues with his descendants.

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In the United States three spellings are found in the family of Maro Raphael Kohnstamm (KB.443), who migrated from Bamberg early in the nineteenth century. The descendants of the eldest son use Konstam, those of the second son Kohnstam, while those of the youngest son preserve the original Kohnstamm.

Another variation is the spelling, of the name in Hebrew characters by the family of Jacob Kohnstamm (KB.411.741), who emigrated to Palestine (now Israel) during the 1930s. Transcribing the Hebrew spelling back into Roman characters the name appears as Kohenshtamm.

The first member of the family known to have emigrated abroad from Niederwerrn was Menachen Hayurn Ha-Kohen (KA.2), who settled in Brighton, England, in 1782. He anglicized his forenames to Emanuel Hyarn and adopted the surname Cohen, long, before the family he left behind in Germany took up the name Kohnstamm. All his descendants remaining in England are through the female line, but the name Cohen continues in the numerous progeny of his son [Abraham \(KA.25\)](#), who emigrated to Australia. Another son, George Moses Cohen (KA.22) emigrated to Canada and abandoned his surname in favour of Benjamin, the maiden name of his mother. His descendants today do not include any in the male line, so that this name no longer continues in the family.

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