

GUGGENHEIM, Fanny,

11 Synagogenweg

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Fanny Guggenheim, née - Obernauer, born on June 21, 1848 in Laupheim; died July 8, 1934 in Laupheim; widow of the carpenter Abraham Guggenheim (1844-1904).



Fanny Guggenheim in front of her house - built in 1844 at Synagogenweg. The address used to be Judenberg 6. On the right: the house today. It has been remarkably renovated and is in its original state.

In 1933, the development of the Jewish community of Laupheim had long passed its zenith. Ever since the end of the 19th century, the number of inhabitants had been decreasing, as the younger generation either immigrated to America or moved to the big cities. There were numerous single older men and even more such women; one of them whose life, in contrast to others, is well-documented, was Fanny Guggenheim (maiden name: Obernauer).

Around 1874/75, Fanny Obernauer was married to Abraham Guggenheim, a carpenter from Tiengen in the High Rhine area. Between 1876 and 1879 the couple had three children: Heinrich (1876), Frieda (1877) and Jonas (1879). In 1892, the family bought the above-depicted house, which supposedly also incorporated the carpenter's workshop. In 1904, Abraham Guggenheim died at age 60; one year later his daughter Frieda, who had taken on the name of Kahn, died during the birth of her first child. Nothing is known about their eldest son Heinrich; Jonas immigrated to America when he was young.

Aus Stadt und Bezirk

Laupheim, 21. Juni

80. Geburtstag. In ungewöhnlicher körperlicher und geistiger Frische und Rüstigkeit feiert heute unsere Mitbürgerin Frau Fanni Guggenheim geb. Obernauer ihren 80. Geburtstag. Die Jubilarin erfreut sich allgemeiner Beliebtheit; sie ist immer hilfsbereit und gütig gegen ihre Nebenmenschen gewesen und hat in jüngeren Jahren mit nie versagender Opferfreudigkeit Kranke betreut. Wir wünschen ihr noch viele lebensfrohe Jahre.

(„Laupheimer Verkündiger“, 21. 6. 1928)

However, Fanny Guggenheim did not allow those cruel strokes of fate to bring her down, but rather she devoted her energy and spirit to the benefit of the community. This becomes quite clear in the brief article published in the local newspaper „Laupheimer Verkündiger“ on June 21, 1928, to honour her on her 80th birthday.

The text also nicely illustrates how peacefully Jews and Christians lived together in the town before 1933. After the Nazis seized power, the only articles the newspapers published were mendacious, mind-poisoning torrents of hatred against the Jews, destroying the peace that once prevailed in the community. Fanny Guggenheim presumably never held an office or had a special function: taking care of those around her was her passion and she tended to the sick without being paid or ordered to do so.

Statt Karten.

Für die anlässlich meines 80. Geburtstages erwiesenen Aufmerksamkeiten sage ich allen Freunden und Bekannten meinen innigsten Dank.

Frau Fanny Guggenheim.

(„Laupheimer Verkündiger“, 30. 6. 1928)

From an announcement in the local newspaper:

I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to all my friends and acquaintances for their kind words on my 80th birthday. Mrs. Fanny Guggenheim

The fact that there is much to be written about Fanny Guggenheim also has to do with John H. Bergmann: He married Fanny's granddaughter, Elsie Guggenheim, in New York in 1945!

There is something about her in his legacy, and she is also mentioned in the Bergmann family chronicle. The following passage is worth quoting verbatim. Here, John Bergmann describes the annual preparation for the Bi'ur ceremony which takes place the day before Passover (chametz is burnt in a bonfire):

"The preparation began soon after Hanukkah, when we went from door to door collecting discarded wood and other flammable materials. Our fathers told us that at times they even 'acquired' part of a fence or part of a wooden gate. We had to do the same so that their achievements would not exceed ours. We all gathered in Fanny Guggenheim's small shed. Her house was in a strategic position at the end of the Judenberg and next to the cemetery on a street which led directly to the Bronner Berg where we would light the fire. Fanny was not known for her patience, and every year there was much bickering about the broken furniture we were said to have stolen from her. Max Bergmann had a special relationship to Fanny - All his life, he was a good friend of her son Jonas who lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He helped her during wartime when she was isolated from her son's support.

One day, as we collected wood for the chometz fire she called for Hans, the writer of these lines, to come into her house. There she showed him two new photographs of her granddaughters in Pittsburgh. Fanny predicted that Hans would immigrate to America someday and marry one of her granddaughters. Back then he was only twelve years old and getting married was definitely not on his priority list. Two World Wars later, however, he met her granddaughter Elsie and married her!" (John H. Bergmann, p. 65 ff.)

When she celebrated her 80th birthday, the local newspaper 'Laupheimer Verkündiger' wished Fanny "many more years full of joie de vivre". Fanny lived six more years after all: She died at the ripe old age of 86, shortly after her birthday in July 1934.