

## The Jewish Community of Laupheim and its Annihilation

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# ISAY, Rosa and Karoline, 58 Kapellenstrasse

Translated by: Adrian Fernandez, Marie-Kristin Fischer, Paulina Hausmann, Nazanin Zoroofchi

Supervisor: Dr. Robynne Flynn-Diez, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Institut für Übersetzen und Dolmetschen Englischabteilung

*DR. ANTJE KÖHLERSCHMIDT*

[Isidor Isay, born December 30, 1863 in Schweich, near Trier, died June 14, 1891 in Pittsburg], **○ Rosa, néé Bernheim**, born September 26, 1863 in Laupheim, died July 24, 1939

– **Karoline, known as Carry, Isay**, born April 16, 1891 in Pittsburg, deported to Riga on November 28, 1941, perished on December 15, 1941 in Riga.



The picture above presents quite a striking portrait of Rosa Isay. Not only does she seem rather dressed up for the occasion, but she also has a calm, friendly and confident gaze. Unfortunately, as the biography of Rosa Isay has only been partially constructible, which character traits and behavior were actually unique to her will remain unknown. But the few known details suggest that she led quite an eventful life. Sadly, many questions remain unanswered, which leaves a lot of room for interpretation.

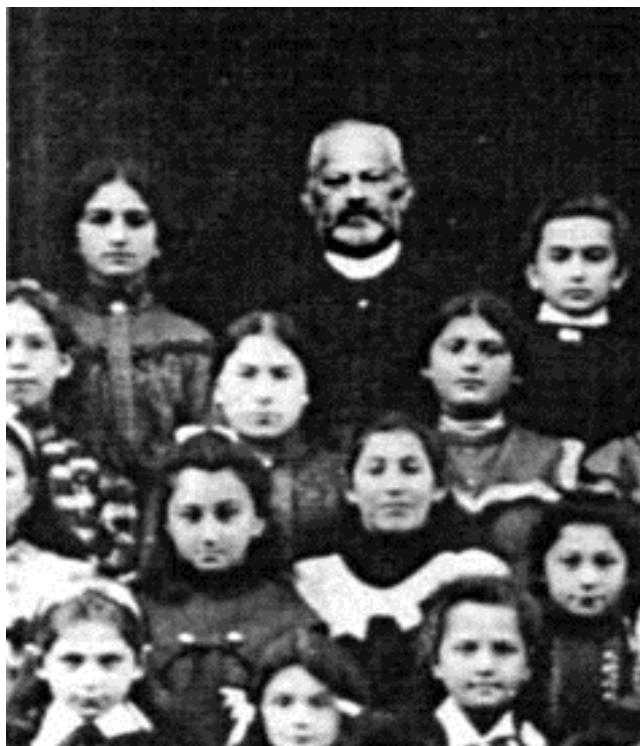
Rosa was born in Laupheim on December 26, 1863 as the daughter of Babette Bernheim, a single mother (1838-1893). Her mother was known as Peppi Bernheim and is buried under this name in the Jewish cemetery in Laupheim, in grave S 17/3. Rosa grew up in Laupheim. On June 15, 1890, she married Isidor Isay in Pittsburg, who was born on December 30, 1863 in Schweich, near Trier. He was also from Germany, but from the Prussian area, as a remark in the registry record reveals. It is completely unclear how and where the two met and why she moved to Pittsburg, U.S.A.

The emigration and immigration of Jewish citizens of Laupheim, but also from other rural Jewish communities, started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the Jewish community in Laupheim continued to grow until 1869, at which point it consisted of 843 people. The following statistics, however, show a significant decrease thereafter: in 1886: 570; in 1900: 443; in 1910: 348; and in 1933: 235. Destinations of the Jewish citizens of Laupheim were bigger German cities like Ulm, Munich or Stuttgart, which offered better living and working conditions. The United States was also a destination for the emigrants, as it embodied the hopes of personal and religious freedom and the American dream of happiness and success. These hopes were unfortunately not to be fulfilled for Isidor and Rosa Isay. The birth of their daughter, Karoline Isay on April 16, 1891 in Pittsburg, was a promising start, but only two months later, on June 14, 1891, Isidor Isay died.

This stroke of fate might have led the young mother and her six month old daughter, who was known as Carry, to return to Laupheim in October 1891. Even though her husband's relatives were living in Pittsburg, she preferred to move back to her hometown and her family. After all her mother was living in Laupheim.

As of October 1891 they were living at 59 Kapellenstrasse. The house had presumably been Peppi Bernheim's parents' house, and had therefore originally belonged to Leopold Bernheim and his wife Esther, né Einstein. Nine of Peppi's eleven siblings had died within a few days or weeks of their birth. Her two older brothers did reach adulthood and get married, but neither were buried in Laupheim. This suggests that they had left their hometown and Peppi Bernheim would have probably inherited her parent's house. After Peppi died, Rosa Isay inherited it. Eventually, after Rosa's death on July 24, 1939, the house was passed on to Rosa's daughter Carry.

Very little is known about the lives of the women of Laupheim. Carry Isay attended the Jewish *Volksschule* (primary school) on Radstrasse. She is shown below on a class photo from 1904 or 1905 with her teacher Mr. Haymann. She is the girl in the second row from the top, second one from the right. This is the only existing picture of her. According to city records, after graduation she worked as a clerk and her mother, Rosa Isay, was a teacher, but where she had been employed could not be determined. In an interview from March 8, 1995, Pastor Burkert mentioned to Benigna Schönhagen that the Isays had once lived next door to the Kirschbaum sisters and across from the Burkert family. Carry used to work at the Bergmann's hair salon. The Isays and the Burkerts visited each other so regularly that they were almost like housemates. The friendship between the Burkerts and their Jewish neighbors was well known, which remained steadfast during the period after 1933. After the war Rosa Burkert helped the Isay relatives as an authorized representative in matters regarding restitution.



*Jewish Volksschule 1904/05, from the left Irma Kirschbaum, Carry Isay, teacher Max Haymann*

According to Pastor Burkert, his sister had sewn pieces of gold, originating from friends in the United States, into Carry's coat before her deportation in November 1941. They had anticipated their fate and declared: "We are never coming back!" They were all very sad. Considering what they had been experiencing since 1933, including complete social exclusion and the deprivation of rights, they had to fear the worst. After her mother's death, Carry Isay lived by herself in the house at 59 Kapellenstrasse. Although she did not sell the house, she was forced to move to the Wendelinsgrube in October 1941. The barracks in the Wendelinsgrube had neither electricity nor running water. Eyewitnesses reported that in addition to miserable living conditions, the Jewish residents suffered mainly from hunger. Her house was rented to pensioner Jakob Rieger as of October 15, 1941.

Carry Isay was assigned to the first deportation to Riga on November 28, 1941. The picture below was taken at the Laupheim West train station. One could assume because of the childhood photo and her resemblance to her mother that the woman next to the police officer is, with the light coat on her arm, Carry Isay.



*Photo of the Deportation from Laupheim West train station, November 20, 1941 Carry Isay (???)*

The so called “evacuation to the east” should have led the victims, and those left behind, to believing that those being deported would be relocated to the east. Starting at the collection camp at Killesberg in Stuttgart, a train with 1013 people left on December 1, 1941. On December 4, 1941, the train reached its destination in Riga. On June 25, 1956, Carry Isay was declared dead by the District Court of Laupheim. The date of her passing is given as December 15, 1941. It is very likely, as with most of those deported with her, that Carry was murdered in the mass executions shortly after her arrival in Riga.

Upon deportation to the Reichskommissariat Ostland (Nazi occupied regime in the Baltic States where Riga was located), the assets of deported Jews became the property of the German Reich in accordance with the Reichsbuergergesetz (Citizen Law in Nazi Germany) of November 25, 1941. Thus Carry Isay’s house at 59 Kapellenstrasse was affected as well and the income generated from her property went to the German Reich.

After 1945, Max, Louis, Adele and Albert Isay, the siblings of Carry’s father, Isidor Isay, sought to clarify the fate of their niece. Thanks to their efforts, an official death certificate was issued by the District Court and the house on Kapellenstrasse was given back to its rightful heirs in 1953. They eventually sold it with the help of realtor Josef Benzinger.

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