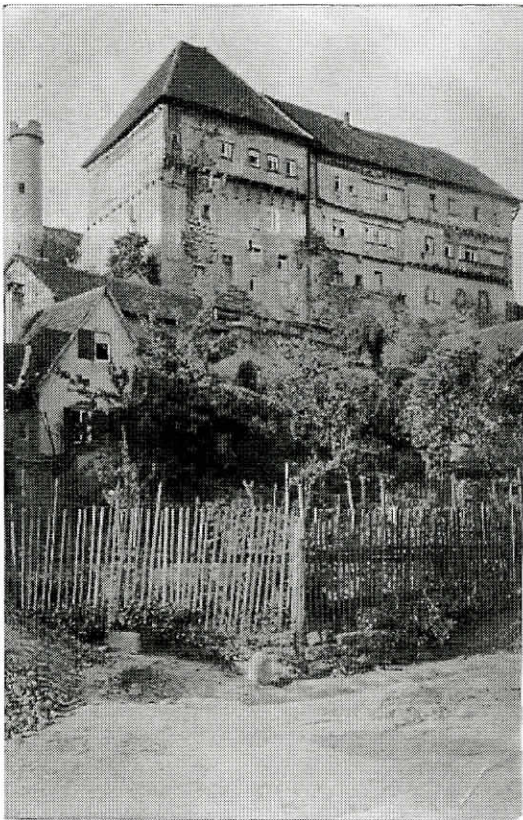


## Mother, how did I get into this?

In 2002, Mother (Olive L. Rosenfield) decided to sell the huge house in Riverdale NY, where the family had lived more than 50 years, and she had to sort out all its contents. I (Claire-Lise Rosenfield) decided to help with the shopping bags filled with photographs (often loose, all unlabeled) and albums (often torn, all unlabeled), brought everything to our home in Geneva, NY, and started sorting....

In the family album inherited from Dad's (Richard E. Rosenfield, M.D.) Pittsburgh parents was an old postcard, sepia colored like turn-of-the-century photos, only labeled on the back with the name of a photographer in a small city of Southern Germany. It had to be the castle where Grandma (Ernestine Loewenthal Rosenfield) had lived when she was a child! I did not remember the name of the town, but she had called the castle "Jew Castle." As it translates in German to "Judenschloss," I plopped that word into the search box of the Google Internet website and... up came Talheim and its Obere Burg! It was unmistakably a renovated version of the castle on Grandma's postcard (see below). I started downloading information on its history and the history of the Jews of Southern Germany. It was all in German and tough to translate. In early 2004, we decided to go to Switzerland visit my family. Why not also go see Talheim? I got in touch with many people by e-mail. Somehow the town of Talheim was not interested in helping us, but we got invaluable advice from Dr. Joachim Hahn, the webmaster of an amazing site on the history of the Jews of Baden-Wuerttemberg, who helped us design our itinerary.



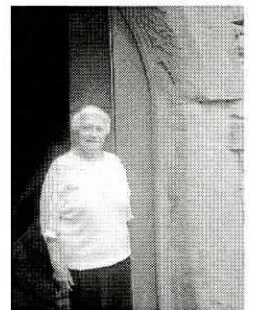
Postcard found in the family album of Ernestine and Abraham Rosenfield. The **Obere Burg** of Talheim was built in three sections. The oldest section (at left in the photos), built in 1180, was called the **Schmidberg**, and later the **Judenschloss**.



The Obere Burg as it appears today in the website "Talheim, Information, Pictures, and History"

We visited **Talheim** in June 2004, walked around the Obere Burg courtyard and had the good fortune to meet Frau Nahr, a woman who lives in the castle (renovated in the 1980s and turned into an apartment house) and who was then unloading groceries from the trunk of her car. She introduced us to Frau Schumm, a 92 year old lady who had lived all her life in the castle. Just before we were to leave the town, the owner of our little hotel called one of the town's historians who interviewed us. After our return to the US, we learned a lot from a little book we had bought in Talheim (Theobald Nebel "*The history of the Jewish community in Talheim*," written in 1962 and re-edited in 1990) but we had still so many unanswered questions on the family's history!

A few weeks later another Talheim historian got in touch with us. Dieter Gaa tried to answer our questions, became fascinated with the subject and traced the genealogy of the family all the way back to the mid-eighteenth century. He even found out that the door to Frau Schumm's flat (with a groove for a mezuzah carved deep into the stone) was the very door to Grandma's childhood home!



Frau Schumm. Note the mezuzah groove above her

## The Jews of Talheim

The emergence of a Jewish community in Talheim goes back to the 18th century. There were Jewish families living in the nearby town of Horkheim, but they had continuous problems with their "protector", the War Council von Buhl. He was ruler over the Palatinate castle and always threatened to hunt them away, but did not for fear of losing the protection money they paid him. At some point, he apparently borrowed money from them, that started a major controversy between them and in 1778 six Jewish families moved into the Talheim Schmidberg castle owned by the Duke of Württemberg. Von Buhl immediately demanded payment for damages to dwellings and loss of protection money, but the Jewish families complained that von Buhl had exploited and used them for thirty years, so the duke of Württemberg allowed the Jewish families to remain in Talheim.

After the Jewish families had lived four years in the Schmidberg castle, the ducal government of Württemberg allowed them to build a bakery and a wash house (mikve) next to the north wall of the castle and, for an additional payment of 20 Karolins, a room for their religious services. Lasting disputes arose over that "prayer room," because the Palatinate authority saw in it a secret attempt to build a synagogue. Peace between the Jews of Talheim and authorities occurred only when Talheim became part of the new Kingdom of Württemberg in 1806. The king of Württemberg was not unfavorable to the Jews, wanted them to have standardized rights and to be the equals of his Christian subjects.

In 1792, there were 53 Jews in Talheim and the community was growing. Salomon Aron was hired as Vorsänger (cantor and teacher), but his salary was so small he had to supplement it by selling dry goods. Young people from Horkheim also joined the group, one of them was 25-year old Maier Loew Moses, who moved to Talheim in 1797. When the Emancipation Edict of the Kingdom of Württemberg (in 1828) required Jews to have family names, Salomon Aron chose the name of Koenigsbacher because he was born in Koenigsbach, whereas Maier Loew Moses chose the name of Loewenthal. Both of them married, had respectively six and eight children. Their families were apparently very close, and two of the Koenigsbacher sons later married two of the Loewenthal daughters. **Salomon Koenigsbacher** was the grandfather of Amalie Koenigsbacher Loewenthal (Grandma's mother), and **Maier Loewenthal** was the grandfather of Max Loewenthal (Grandma's father).

The Emancipation Edict also allowed Jews to have manual and academic professions as well as to own houses and land, although they were still locked out of public offices. Thus the Jews of Talheim started to acquire houses, vineyards and fields. Even the Schmidberg Castle was formally bought from its Wuerttemberg owners in 1821 and was called from then on "**Judenburg**" or "**Judenschloss**" (Jew Castle). Jewish families lived mainly from trading cattle and selling dry goods. For many years, Jewish children went to a school located in the synagogue building, then the community acquired a separate house for the school in 1857. Talheim Jews reached a population peak of 122 around 1858. The Jewish community was a branch of the one in Sontheim until 1849, then became independent.

After 1850, a large wave of emigration to America started in Germany. The citizens of Wuerttemberg, Jews and non-Jews alike, were drawn to "America, the country reknown for unlimited future possibilities!" The emigration sharply reduced the Talheim Jewish community. Between 1856 and 1898, 16 of the 24 grandchildren of Salomon Koenigsbacher emigrated to the USA. Grandma's grandaunt Regine Koenigsbacher, buried in the Sontheim cemetery in 1890, was the last Koenigsbacher to die in Talheim.

The Nazi nightmare came slowly to Talheim, but inexorably reached the town. In 1936 the "Swabian Tageszeitung" published inflammatory articles against the Jewish community, ending with "hopefully the time is not far, when the Jüdenschloss is the only memory of the bad characteristics of this strange race." Half of the Talheim Jews managed to emigrate (among them three of Grandma's Loewenthal cousins), but the remaining 38 others perished after deportations to the east in 1941-42 (among them eight of Grandma's Loewenthal cousins). Today no Jews live in Talheim. Nobody returned. Only the Sontheim Jewish cemetery remains a witness, a mute reminder of the Jewish life in the region.



**The Talheim  
synagogue (1932)**

The "prayer-room, mikve and bakery" was completely renovated in 1836: the synagogue was enlarged to fill the upper part of the building; the ritual bath, the school and the teacher's dwelling divided the lower floor. The synagogue was renovated again in 1870 and in 1929, and was used until 1938.

As hundreds of other synagogues in Germany, the Talheim synagogue was a victim of the Nazi era. Because the building was close to dwellings belonging to non-Jews, it was not burned down on Kristallnacht (November 9, 1938), but on the following night SA men from Heilbronn wrecked the inside of the synagogue and burned its contents on one of the village squares. Then the Jewish community had to pay for the damages done to the synagogue and to their own houses! The synagogue building was further damaged during combats in 1945, it partially collapsed during a storm in 1952 and was destroyed later that year. A memorial plaque was placed in 1983 on the castle wall as a reminder of the location of the synagogue.

## Koenigsbachers and Loewenthals in America

From the research of Talheim historian Dieter Gaa, I had found out that Salomon Koenigsbacher had twenty-four grandchildren and that sixteen of them emigrated to the US. Where did they all go? Some the pictures from the Pittsburgh album were probably photos of their descendants. But how could I identify the photos if I did not know the names? Some of their living descendants might be able to identify the people on my pictures. But how can I find out who they are? That question prompted me to get in touch with Pittsburgh cemeteries.

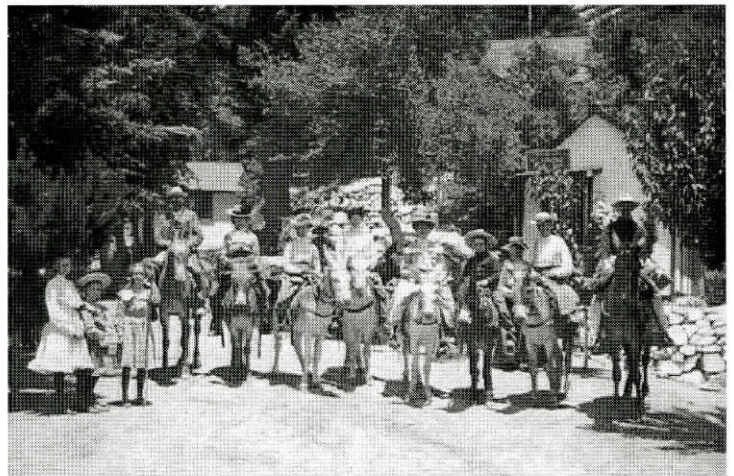
One of the archivists I talked to, Martha Berg at Rodef Sholom, remembered a young man who had recently done research on the Kingsbachers and Loewenthals. She got in touch with him, he contacted me by return e-mail and has been sharing with me the extensive amount of information he had gathered on the family. An attorney in Saint Louis, MO, **David Meyer** is a great-great-grandson of Moses Kingsbaker, one of the first Koenigsbachers who emigrated to this country. He started searching the family's history much in the same way as I had: "grandparents living in same house for over 50 years," "accumulated pictures," "spending hours in the basement going through them and figuring out who everyone was," "deciding to find out what happened to all of them!" As most of the Midwestern Kingsbakers had settled in the early 20th century in the Los Angeles area, he even wrote an article for "Roots-Key" (the newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles) using photographs from an old family album in the unfulfilled hope that someone in Los Angeles would recognize some of the people in the photographs. Based on the information David provided me, I was able to complete the Koenigsbacher and Loewenthal Family Lines. Please look up the following pages, because what is said here is hard to understand without placing a name in its Family Line.

David Meyer also introduced me to **Louis Kingsbaker**, who lived in Pittsburgh until 1979 and now resides in Atlanta, GA. Louis remembers well Ernestine Lowenthal Rosenfield and her family in Pittsburgh. As a child, he used to have an egg-route and sold eggs to all of them! As a chemical engineer he traveled all over the world and he still travels a lot now that he is retired. In 1995, he took a trip to Talheim, was guided through the town by the mayor and made a video of the group walking in the Talheim streets, in the Obere Burg courtyard and around the Sontheim cemetery. He also visited the town's archives and was given copies of the family papers. Just for him, all the information neatly handwritten in undecipherable Gothic script was retyped in very understandable German!

David Meyer and Louis Kingsbaker helped answer many of the questions we had about the family. One of those questions concerned the port of entry chosen by Grandpa's family when they emigrated to America in 1898. I had done exhaustive searches of the Ellis Island records, thinking they had entered the USA through Ellis Island like most late 19th century immigrants. Failing to find any trace of the family, I finally became convinced they had taken another route, probably the one taken years before by their brothers and cousins. According to David Meyer, Moses Kingsbaker and his siblings came through **Baltimore**, because Maryland was the early US outpost in the 1850's and because the first Koenigsbachers to marry did so in either Baltimore or Frederick. David also pointed out to me that, like so many other immigrants wanting to start a new life in America, all the Koenigsbacher immigrants changed their family name. All the children of Aron Koenigsbacher chose Kingsbaker, whereas the children of Moses and of Abraham Koenigsbacher changed theirs to either Konigsbacher or Kingsbaker.

David Meyer and Louis Kingsbaker also gave me an idea of the overall family dynamics: where they settled, when they branched out, and what they did there. By the 1880s, everyone had headed for the Midwest (Illinois-Iowa-Missouri), with subsequent moves for some on to Pittsburgh or to California. Moses Kingsbaker spent most of his life in Quincy, IL, and all of his siblings lived there at one point or another. His mother, Marianne Koenigsbacher, joined them after her husband Aron died in Talheim and was buried the Sontheim cemetery.

Louis Kingsbaker remembers that "the Kingsbaker Brothers, including my grandfather, rolled cigars, went out in the countryside and sold them, and became quite well off from this business. One of their employees, an Englishman who rolled cigars, was Samuel Gompers. After leaving Quincy, he started the labor union movement in the US, the American Federation of Labor." Louis Kingsbaker's grandfather (whose name was also Louis) married Hannah Lehman, the sister-in-law of his Pittsburgh cousin Aron Kingsbaker. The couple first lived in Quincy, IL, but Hannah did not like the climate, so they moved to Pittsburgh where he had a wholesale clothing business. Other Kingsbakers moved to California, were cigar distributors at first, then diversified into real estate, then wholesale shipping of fruit and vegetables.

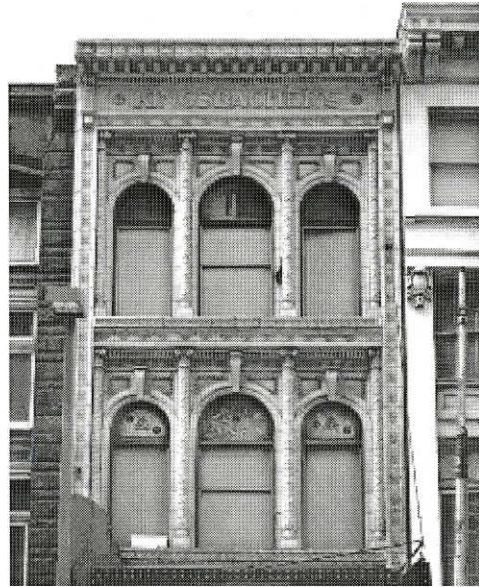


California Kingsbakers in Pasadena, 1909

## Kingsbachers and Lowenthals in Pittsburgh

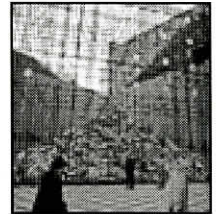
Amalia and Max Loewenthal, Grandma's parents, remained in Talheim and took care of the old generation. In the Loewenthal household, Amalia and her sister Zerline cared for their father during two years until Abraham Koenigsbacher passed away in 1887. Zerline lived in the household, as well as a Koenigsbacher aunt, Regine, who passed away in 1890. Finally the family decided to leave for America and the family obtained permission to emigrate on March 7, 1898. They sold the portions of the Judenschloss they owned on March 14, and left Talheim for America on May 12. Zerline sold her part of Judenschloss on the same day as the Loewenthals did, and probably emigrated in the same time as they did. Grandma's mother was the last Koenigsbacher to leave Talheim and the family were the last Jews to leave the Judenschloss. They had decided to go to Pittsburgh, PA, where Grandma's uncles Morris and Aron Kingsbacher had a very prosperous jewelry business.

Established in 1873, the Kingsbacher Brothers were "Importers and Jobbers in Gold, Plate, and Jet Jewelry," and later also sold watches, clocks and silverware. In 1909, the three story Kingsbacher building was erected at 637 Liberty Avenue, in the heart of what was becoming Pittsburgh's booming downtown: narrow but very deep (22' x 180'), with oversized ceiling heights, a handsome terracotta facade, and **Kingsbacher's** written in big letters above the top floor. During the 1930's Depression, Kingsbacher's was sold, then the neighborhood slowly declined. In 1962, the building's second floor was converted into a billiard hall and the first floor was transformed into an arcade for the "Bizarre Art Theater" ("Pittsburgh's Only Adult Supermarket!"). In 1984, the destruction of the disfigured Kingsbacher's and of two other historical buildings triggered Pittsburgh into conserving its Cultural District. In 1999 as a tribute to a lost past, pieces from the three fallen buildings were included into a pyramid-shaped sculpture entitled *Palazzo Nudo*. Intriguing by day, mesmerizing by night, *Palazzo Nudo* stood next to Tambellini's restaurant on Seventh Street until 2004.

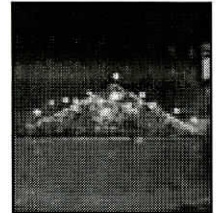


Kingsbacher's upper floors, 1984

Alexandr Brodsky's  
*Palazzo Nudo*



by day



by night

From my recollection of Grandma's stories, the family of Max Loewenthal didn't do too well economically in Pittsburgh. She had to go work in the jewelry business of her Koenigsbacher uncles to support the family. A few years later she met Abraham Rosenfield, married him in 1910, and they had two children, Richard and Alvin. Alvin was handicapped, so he never married, but Richard became a beloved physician, renowned for his groundbreaking research on the Rh-factor, who married Olive Levy from Jamaica and they had three children. Frieda Loewenthal married Ralph Mannheimer, son of her aunt Carrie Koenigsbacher; they had one son who died as an infant. Siegfried Loewenthal never married. In 1920, Lydia Loewenthal married the butcher Morris Frank (see photos below), but he died in 1922 of a heart attack at the age of 31, and Lydia never remarried. Among the family pictures I found a portrait of Morris taken in Germany, a thin and handsome man in full Bavarian costume. Around the hand-made cardboard frame were faded dried flowers, and the following was penciled on the back: *Keep this as an eternal reminder and never forget passed times, and remember the old saying: "Look forward, never behind, a courageous good humor is the key to life's happiness."* This from your Morris, who often thinks about you .

