Memorials in stone

Bronze-covered squares honor victims of Nazi regime

By Jayne Traendly
Stars and Stripes

This stone in front of a house on Niederwaldstrasse in Wiesbaden, Germany, reads: Here lived Amalie Blühdorn, born Horn, in the year 1864, deported 1942 to Theresienstadt, dead 31.10.1942.

For more information on the Aktives Museum für Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte and its projects, research materials and educational programs, go to www.am-spiegelgasse.de/en. The Stolpersteine Project website is www.stolpersteine.com (in German).

In that case," said Lutz-Kopp, "the death date is fictional or based on departing trains where we know no one survived.

The researcher then writes a biography. During a small ceremony in front of the home in which the memory stone is laid, the biography is read aloud and flowers are placed on the site.

It was my neighbor in the Niederwaldstrasse house, Angelika Thomas-Semm, who sponsored Amalie’s memory stone. What impressed her about the project was that passers-by had to bend over to read the stones, a bow that invoked an act of reverence to the dead. She also saw that Amalie had been taken from Niederraltsstrasse on Aug. 22, 1942, and deported a few days later. Thomas-Semm was born Aug. 22, 1952. The coincidence of the two dates made her realize "I must do this."

And so it was, 68 years after her death that I found myself to pay our respects to Amalie. The stone has returned her name to the last real home she knew. And Amalie Blühdorn’s life has not been forgotten.

— Translated from a German biography

A Nazi soldier watches as Jews wait on the Schlauchtroh (slaughterhouse) ramp near the train station in Wiesbaden, Germany, before being deported on Sept. 9, 1942.

The Life of Amalie Blühdorn

Amalie (Horn) Blühdorn was born Oct. 31, 1864. She married Leopold Blühdorn, a clothing and accessories business owner in Cologne. They had two children, Käte and Eugen, and a good life. She loved art and collecting porcelain.

In 1921, Amalie suddenly found herself widowed. But she continued to run the family business with Eugen until 1933, when a Nazi prohibition against doing business with Jews forced them to sell their business and stock and move to Wiesbaden.

There the Nazis demanded that she, along with other Jews, give up all valuables and jewelry. Amalie resisted. She told her daughter that she wouldn’t even think of separating herself from her possessions and that no one could force her.

In 1939, Käte emigrated to America. Amalie and Eugen remained behind. Life for Amalie became increasingly difficult, according to a neighbor. She suffered both physically and mentally. She was also unbearably cold because she wasn’t allowed any coal and little food. In May 1942, hearing that he would be deported, an already emotionally wounded Eugen committed suicide with his mother present.

Months later, her family gone, Amalie was on a train to the Theresienstadt concentration camp as one of more than 1,500 Jews who would be deported in three groups from the city.

There she wouldn’t live long. On Oct. 31, 1942, 78 years to the day she was born, Amalie Blühdorn died at camp.

— Translated from a German biography

S t a r s a n d S t r i p e s

Know & Go:

The Aktives Museum for German-Jewish History has organized the Stolpersteine (Stolperstein) Project. It means “pavement stone). Since 1997, its creator, Cologne artist Gunter Demnig, has engraved thousands of memory stones in 500 German towns as well as in Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Poland. Inscribed on each is the skeletal details of a life: name, date of birth, date of arrest or deportation and date of death or murder.

Today there are more than 22,000 names remembered in memory stones in 500 German towns.

This includes the city archives, which has a database with the names of all deported and murdered Jews in Wiesbaden, as well as their addresses and professions. For some, there is no data on their fate.

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