

SCHMAL, Julius,

2 Marktplatz

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DR . ANTJE KÖHLERSCHMIDT

Julius Schmal, born July 1, 1863 in Laupheim, died November 11, 1938 in Stuttgart, OO **Betty Schmal, née Oberdorfer**, died June 25, 1874 in Pflaumloch; deportation on August 19, 1942 to Theresienstadt, died there September 30, 1943,

[- Heinrich Schmal, born July 21, 1897 in Laupheim, died August 8, 1897 in Laupheim],

[- Simon Schmal, born July 12, 1898 in Laupheim],

[- Recha Schmal, born September 29, 1900 in Laupheim; deportation August 23, 1942 to the concentration camp Theresienstadt, freed!],

[- Otto Schmal, born March 10, 1905 in Laupheim].

Unsere geliebte Mutter

BETTY SCHMAL

geb. Oberdorfer

(früher Laupheim, Württemberg)

ist am 30. September 1943 in ihrem 69. Lebensjahr in Theresienstadt gestorben.

Dr. SIMON SCHMAL

Ithaca, N. Y.

RECHA SCHMAL

Flüchtlingslager Les Avants sur Montreux, Schweiz

OTTO SCHMAL

Ndola, Northern Rhodesia, South Africa.

Betty Schmal, née Obernauer, died in Theresienstadt¹ on September 30, 1943. Illustrated by her children's whereabouts, her obituary depicts the diverse life journeys of the different family members. According to the obituary, the escape, or rather fate, had dispersed the siblings onto three different continents during the time of National Socialism. In 1945, Simon Schmal was living in the United States, Recha in Switzerland and Otto in South Africa. Based on a lack of information, only fragments of their subsequent lives can be traced.

Our beloved mother

BETTY SCHMAL

née Oberdorfer

(former residence in Laupheim, Württemberg)

Died aged 69 in Theresienstadt on September 30, 1943.

SIMON SCHMAL, MD

Ithaca, New York

RECHA SCHMAL

Refugee Camp Les Avants sur Montreux, Switzerland

OTTO SCHMAL

Ndola, Northern Rhodesia, South Africa

„Aufbau“, New York v. 4. 5. 1945

¹ Rheda-Wiedenbruck is a city in North-West Germany; the distance between Laupheim and Rheda-Wiedenbruck is approximately 330 miles.

The Schmal family in Laupheim

We will first take a look at Laupheim, where the oldest family member, Simon Schmal, was buried at the Jewish cemetery in 1823. Julius Schmal belonged to the fourth generation of the local family and was the fifth of eleven children of Simon (1828-1898) and Emilia Schmal, née Löwengardt (1833-1900). He grew up in Laupheim and followed in his father's professional footsteps, becoming a butcher and merchant. On October 19, 1896, he married Betty Oberdorfer from Pflaumloch.

The couple had a home on 2 Marktplatz. Heinrich, first-born son died shortly after his birth on August 8, 1897. A year later on July 12, 1898, their son Simon was born. Their only daughter, Recha, was born on September 29, 1900 and her younger brother Otto was born on March 10, 1905. The three siblings grew up in Laupheim, attended the Jewish *Volksschule*² and the eldest son, Simon, attended the *Latein- und Realschule*³. Pictured below is Recha Schmal aged nine. The picture was taken in the Jewish Volksschule, where Bernhard Sichel worked as a teacher.



*Israelitische Volksschule, 1909:
Emma Heumann, Recha Schmal, in
front Poldele Friedberger.*

Little is known about the siblings' parents, Julius and Betty Schmal, as not even a picture of them could be found. Julius Schmal, who, like his son Simon in later years, did his military service in Imperial Germany, was honored on January 29, 1927 during the general assembly of the interdenominational "*Krieger- und Veteranenvereins Lauheim*"⁴, held in the small *Rabensaal*. "When it came to honoring their comrades, the comrades Münch Paul, Traub Mathias,

² a type of basic primary and secondary school in Germany.

³ the oldest municipality of Stuttgart, the state capital of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

⁴ the imperial medicinal calendar.

Preßmar Wilhelm, Einstein Max, Lang Bernhard, Müller Johannes, Bitterle Max and Schmal Julius received the *Ehrenschild*⁵ for their twenty-five-year membership." („Laupheimer Verkündiger“ from January 31, 1927)

According to another article from the „*Gemeindezeitung für die israelitischen Gemeinden Württembergs*“⁶ from February 16, 1928 around the time of the plenary session of the Israelite woman’s association, there was a cultural addition to the more formal items on the agenda: “The musical performances by Ms. Wallersteiner and Kahn and Messrs Kurz and Schmal were followed by a parody on the women of the association, written by our local poet and superbly performed by a couple of young girls from our community.” The Mr. Schmal mentioned is very likely 23-year-old Otto Schmal.

Simon Schmal

The eldest son, Simon, is pictured in a photograph of Laupheim’s *Latein- und Realschule* from 1910, in which he looks confidently at the camera. He successfully finished school and obtained his *Abitur*⁷, in order to study medicine in Tübingen, Munich and Freiburg. Then World War I broke out. As a nineteen-year-old student of medicine he was sent to the reserve infantry regiment 247 in Wiblingen on January 22, 1917, where he obtained the rank of Private. As early as 1917, he fought in the Spring Battle at Arras, in the Fall and Winter Battles at Flanders and was deployed during the offensive at Kemmel in 1918. He received the *Iron Cross Second Class* as well as the Silver military medal of Württemberg. After the German Revolution of 1918-19 and the armistice of Compiègne, he was discharged on December 2, 1918. Upon his return, he took up his medical studies and in 1923 he received his license to practice as a doctor. In the same year, he was awarded his MD in Freiburg. In the *Reichs-Medizin-Kalender*⁸ from 1935, he was listed as a pediatrician with an office on Stuttgart’s Königstraße, house number 44. On March 12, 1936, he married Greta Schmidt with whom he immigrated to the US, namely Ithaca, New York, where he worked as a GP.

⁸ The Warrior and Veteran Society of Laupheim



Realschule 1910: Simon Schmal (above), Wörz (below).

(Picture: Archive Ernst Schäll)

Otto Schmal

The youngest of the siblings had lived in Laupheim up until the fall of 1919, the year in which he moved to Wiedenbruck⁹ in Westfalia. As stated in the documents of the civil registry office, he married Hilda Julia Rothenburg in Hannover on August 25, 1938. According to the obituary printed above, he and his wife managed to immigrate to South Africa. There is no further information concerning his life.

Recha Schmal and her parents

Just like her older brother Simon, Recha Schmal went into the medical field. After graduating from school in Laupheim, she successfully completed her training as a nurse in Stuttgart, where she lived on Bismarckstraße. The official records state that she was registered as a resident of Laupheim until April 2, 1928. She then moved to Bad Cannstatt¹⁰, which had had a Jewish congregation since 1871 that was joined together with the congregation in Stuttgart in 1936. There is no reliable information about her subsequent years, but it is assumed she pursued her career as a nurse. Her connection to Laupheim, however, remained intact, thanks to her parents and her close friendships to schoolmates such as Gretel Gideon. A photograph from 1916 shows the two girls as 16-year-olds.



Gretel Gideon and Recha Schmal around 1916. Recha survived the concentration camp Theresienstadt.

(Picture: Bilderkammer Museum)

In 1935 or rather 1936, Recha's parents, Julius and Betty Schmal, moved to Bad Cannstatt and on November 11, 1938, her father passed away in Stuttgart, where he was also buried. In contrast to her brothers, Simon and Otto, Recha and her mother did not manage to escape from Nazi Germany. Instead, both were deported to the concentration camp Theresienstadt on August 23, 1942, together with Selma Wertheimer, who

¹⁰ a medal of honor.

was two years younger than Recha and was also from Laupheim. Three of Selma's postcards sent from Theresienstadt in 1943/44 to Gretel Gideon, who had been her neighbor on Radstraße and who had managed to escape to Switzerland, could be preserved and are on display in the museum collection in Laupheim.

*„My dearest friends,
Theresienstadt, October 18th, 1943. I was very pleased to receive your greetings and I hope that you, my dear Gretel, are feeling much better. I'm doing as good as can be expected under these circumstances and I'm working every day. My parents have passed away. I see Recha quite often; we're both living in the same house.
Warmest regards,
Selma Wertheimer"*

The tone and content of the postcard is kept neutral, as it had to pass censorship by the Nazis at the concentration camp Theresienstadt in order to reach the addressee. Not only Selma Wertheimer lost her parents in Theresienstadt in quick succession in January and February of 1943, but so did Recha. Her mother Betty Schmal also passed away in the concentration camp Theresienstadt, on September 30, 1943. The dreadful living conditions in the overcrowded camp contributed to an increased mortality rate. Resi Weglein who was a nurse in Ulm and who recorded her experiences in her memoirs "*Als Krankenschwester im KZ Theresienstadt*"¹¹ remembered Elsa Ruth Rieser and Recha Schmal who both hailed from Laupheim and who worked as nurses in the infirmary, treating predominantly old inmates.

In February of 1945, more than 1200 people were requested for a transport to Switzerland by the SS, amongst them 400 who had been specifically asked for by relatives who were living abroad. This came about as a result of international and especially Jewish interventions and was made possible by an agreement between the former Swiss Federal President Jean Marie Musy and the *Reichsführer SS*¹² Heinrich Himmler. This was a unique event in the history of the ghetto, which was met with distrust by the inmates. The countless transports from Theresienstadt predominantly led to the big extermination camps, such as Treblinka and Auschwitz, where the deportees were murdered and this was why not everybody agreed to the journey to Switzerland. Eyewitness Resi Weglein describes the transport as follows:

"The SS had of course taken a closer look at the volunteers and the requested inmates who had gathered in the Sokolawna¹³. Only those with a relatively good constitution were allowed on board the train. Seeing as most of the inmates were emaciated, the choice was rather limited and the SS scared many when they declared that the party's powers extended the borders to Switzerland and those who spread horror stories would suffer greatly. The SS regarded the truth as horror and with their bad conscience came much fear... People were only allowed to bring a suitcase and a small sleeping bag; only things they were able to carry themselves. The Welfare Court or Probate Court would collect their remaining things after their departure. Around six o'clock in the morning the people from the Magdeburg barracks returned home. Once again, there was an indescribable excitement in the camp, as there had to be 1200 people in the locks until the evening. War-disabled persons or invalids were excluded from the transport. For the first time, those who left did not receive the ignominious dog tag with their new transport number. On the other hand, they had to leave behind their ghetto money and savings books. And for the first time there were no cattle trucks parked at the platform of the station on Bahnhofstraße, but real express wagons. Nevertheless, we remained suspicious and nobody believed you could be "de-ghettoized".

As with earlier transports we agreed with friends and families that they should write at the earliest possibility. As before, we looked for key words that would, once we got news, indicate whether or not the people were better off.

The few messages that found their way to us from death camps such as Birkenau-Auschwitz were full of mistakes. Therefore we knew that those poor souls were far worse off than we were. We first received news from Switzerland in April, without any spelling mistakes, expressing their deep thanks to the good people that took care of those Jews. I have read three of the 35 postcards shared in the camp...." (Resi Weglein, S. 78-79)

On February 5, 1945, the train with the inmates had left Theresienstadt towards Switzerland. Thanks to this transport, Recha Schmal was freed and took refuge in the refugee camp Les Avant sur Montreux, Switzerland¹⁴, as described in Betty Schmal's obituary. Alongside Elsa Ruth Rieser, she was one of two survivors of the Holocaust from Laupheim who remained in Germany.

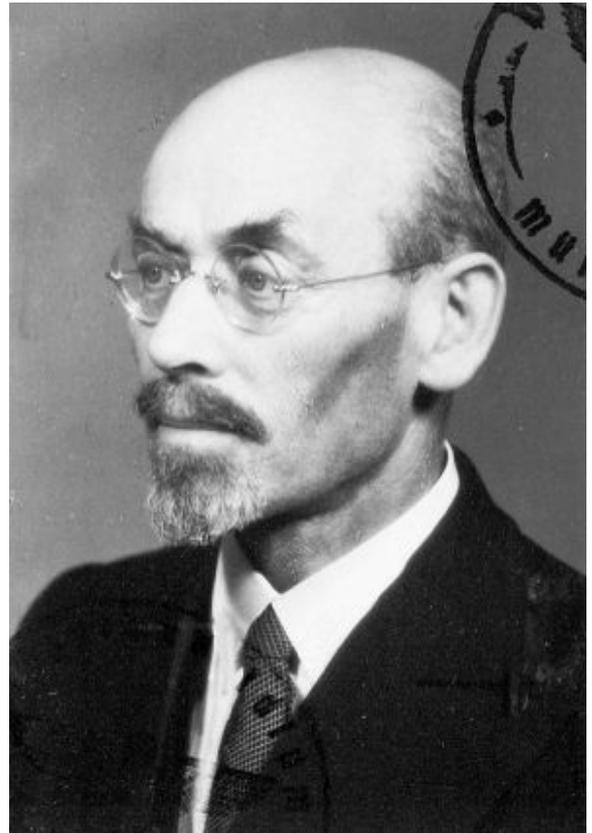
¹³ a local newspaper for the Jewish community of the German state of Württemberg.

¹⁴ school examination taken at the end of year 12/13 and approximately equivalent to the American SAT exam.

The remaining lives of the three siblings, Simon, Recha und Otto Schmal, scattered across three continents, could not be traced after the end of the war.

Isidor Schmal

Enquiries about people from Laupheim who moved to Munich led to a younger brother of Julius Schmal called Isidor Schmal who was born on January 9, 1871 in Laupheim. After graduating school he went to Munich in 1888 where he worked as an authorized signatory as well as an expert on ink and adhesives at the company *C. Stark, Chemische Tintenfabrik und Klebstoffe*¹⁵, at 14 Nussbaumstraße in Munich. Just like his sister-in-law, Betty Schmal, née Oberdorfer, and his niece, Recha Schmal, he was deported from Munich to Theresienstadt on July 2, 1942. On September 19, 1943, he was deported to the death camp Treblinka where he was murdered.



Isidor Schmal.

(Foto: Stadtarchiv München)

¹⁶ translated to „Serving as a nurse in the concentration camp of Theresienstadt“.

¹ the rank of a general of the army of the SS, reserved for Heinrich Himmler.

¹ a former clubhouse equipped with a gym that belonged to the Czech Gymnastics Association Sokol; during National Socialism, the [14]Nazis had set up a "Typhus hospital and Siechenheim", the latter being an archaic German term for home of the sick.

¹ The distance between the concentration camp Theresienstadt and Les Avant sur Montreux is around 600 miles

¹ translates to „Chemical Factory for ink and adhesives“

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