



The Rosenstrasse Foundation: Finding the Women that Demonstrated Civil Courage in Nazi Germany



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Abstract

The Holocaust will forever remain a somber chapter in human history which included the loss of roughly eleven million lives.¹ Adolf Hitler—the leader of the country spearheading this genocide, Germany—was able to commit this travesty because he “controlled the populace through social norms, not just through force.”³ However, in February of 1943 a demonstration within the city of Berlin proved that this philosophy was not infallible. While the Nuremberg Laws stated that intermarried Jews—or Jewish people wed to non-Jewish spouses—were granted a deferral from deportation, on “February 27th, 1943 [...] out of 10,000 Berliners arrested, around 2,000 were married to non-Jewish women [and held] in a collection center at Rosenstrasse in central Berlin.”² Subsequently, the wives of these prisoners protested their apprehension and succeeded in freeing their spouses. The Rosenstrasse Foundation is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to celebrating this act of courage. More specifically, the Rosenstrasse foundation utilizes records of the women that were present throughout this protest and conducts genealogical research in order to learn more about their identities and living relatives. The information gathered is then utilized to produce testimonials in order to highlight their roles. These are then published on the website alongside a larger database with similar stories of their kind. Additionally, the genealogical research that focuses on discovering relatives of these participants has assisted in forming a community of descendants. This specific project was focused on advancing these efforts. In collaboration with the resources that the Rosenstrasse Foundation has compiled, this research was meant to assist in learning more about one specific participant present and discovering potential leads to living relatives. This is in hope of eventually producing a testimonial to add to the valuable work the Rosenstrasse Foundation has been conducting. This protest was a testament to the bravery of these women, and this research in collaboration with the Rosenstrasse Foundation will highlight their courage.

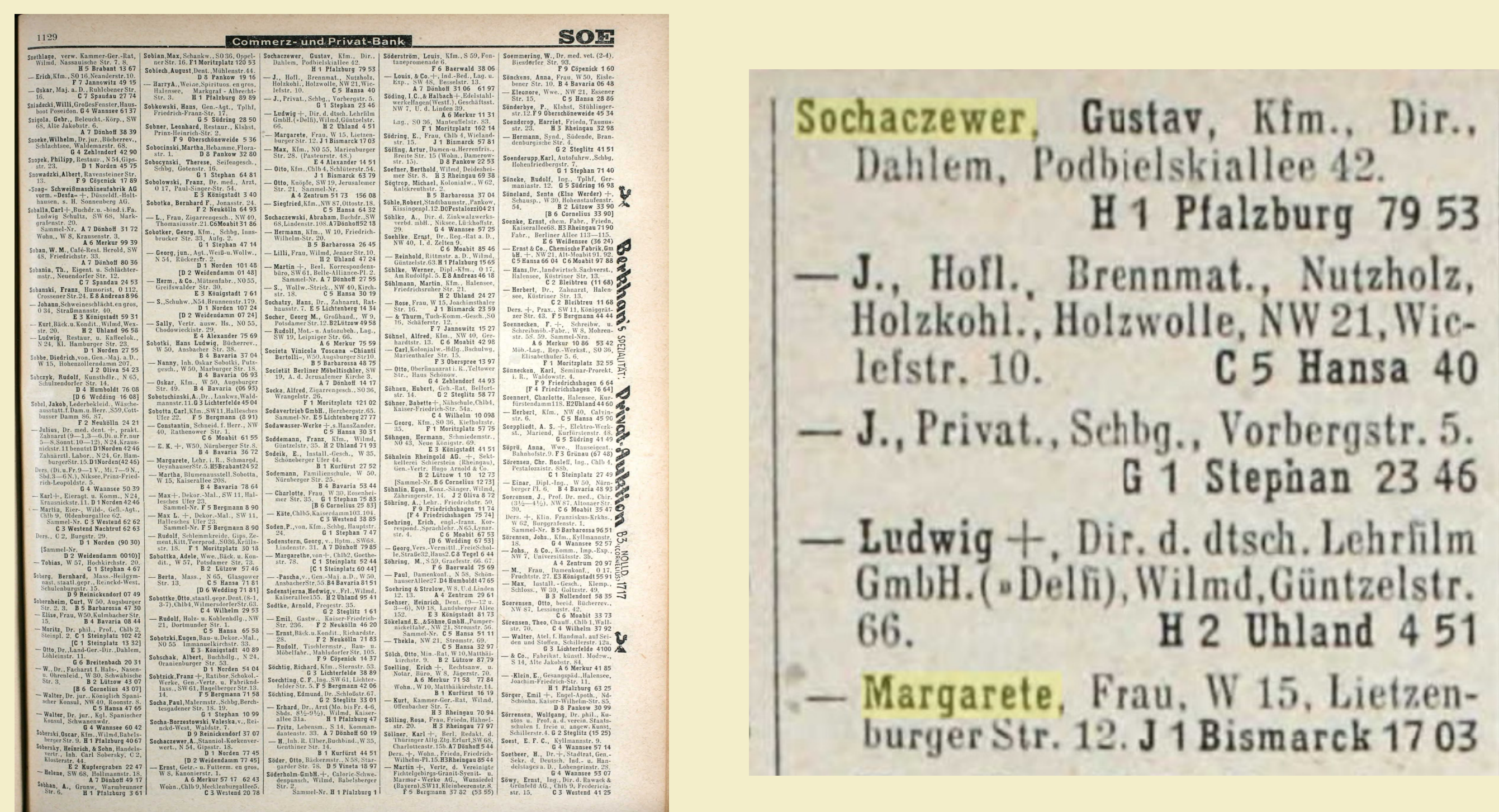
Methods

In order to complete this research, there are multiple steps that must be completed— including:

- Referencing database the Rosenstrasse Foundation created based on information within the Wiener Holocaust Library containing the names and last known location of individuals
- Input this data with estimated birth year based on the time this protest occurred to genealogy site—namely ancestry.com— to locate information about the person’s life/familial connection
- Consolidate into a testimonial about individuals’ life and role in the Rosenstrasse protest.

Results

This research included quite a bit of trial and error in an attempt to track other participants of the protest and their relatives. However, the genealogical research—utilizing ancestry.com specifically—was eventually successful when focused on Margarete Sochaczewer. This lead took this research to a German phonebook from the years 1915-1981. As seen below in figure one, this woman’s name has been traced back to the area that this protest took place. This information led the research to progress further into discovering Sochaczewer’s possible family trees which can be seen in Figure 2 below. At this point, there is no definitive answer regarding which family tree Sochaczewer belongs to, but further research may shed light on that query. Hopefully, this will allow answers about this woman’s life to be found in the future and assist in constructing a testimonial for the Rosenstrasse Foundation that will highlight her life.



¹Figure 1: phone book Sochaczewer was traced back to

Future Research

If provided with additional time to further this research, the next step would be to find Margarete Sochaczewer’s family tree. This could assist in understanding her life and how it progressed after the Rosenstrasse protest—homes, life span, etc. Additionally, it could be used to determine whether there are any living-relatives that have information regarding Sochaczewer’s life. If these descendants can be found and are willing to speak, this would once again help to understand who this woman was and the life she led. This is incredibly important because it would provide the information necessary to create and publish a testimonial memorializing that life and bravery on the Rosenstrasse Foundation’s website for all to appreciate.

Conclusions

These results have provided a valuable starting point for the Rosenstrasse Foundation’s mission to highlight the women that exemplified civil courage through their role in the Rosenstrasse protest. These results have helped to locate one of those individuals—Margarete Sochaczewer—on an ancestry platform, discovered several potential family trees, and could assist in learning more about her life. Margarete and the rest of these women deserve appreciation for their bravery, and this research in collaboration with the Rosenstrasse Foundation will eventually lead to the creation of testimonials that can do just that.

References

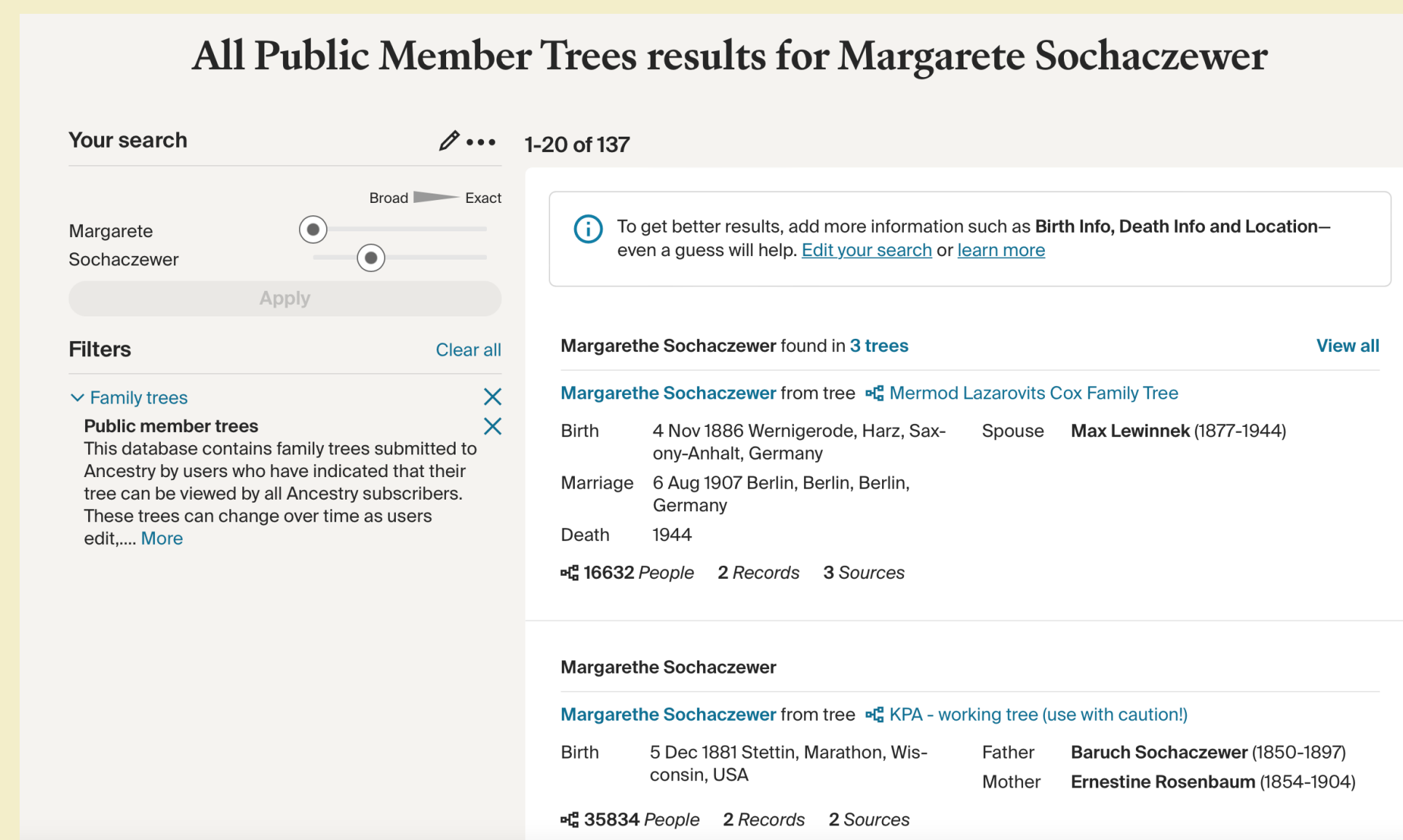
¹“Holocaust Misconceptions.” *Illinois Holocaust Museum*, 1 June 2023, www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/holocaust-misconceptions/.

²“Rosenstrasse Protest.” *Main Site*, rosenstrassefounda.wixsite.com/my-site/rosenstrasse-protest. Accessed 3 Feb. 2024.

³Stoltzfus, Nathan. “The Limits of Policy: Social Protection of Intermarried German Jews in Nazi Germany.” *Resistance of the Heart*, W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1996, 11

⁴“Margarete Sochaczewer in the German Phone Directories, 1915-1981.” *Join Ancestry®*, www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/12319567:60654?tid=&pid=&queryId=a6a9a4c1-2a92-41af-acf3-20fe7b0926c0&_phsrc=EBB1&_phstart=successSource. Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.

⁵*All public member trees results for Margarete Sochaczewer*. Margarete Sochaczewer - Ancestry.com. (n.d.). https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1030/?name=Margarete_\Sochaczewer



²Figure 2: Screenshot of page from ancestry.com with Sochaczewer’s potential family trees