

Short Bio for the WAG Scholars' Working Group on German Rabbis after 1933 at LMU München

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About Me:

I am a candidate for a Masters in Jewish Studies, but my interest in German rabbis preceded any academic pursuit. I grew up in the bosom of the German Jewish community in the Washington Heights area of New York City. I attended the same synagogue and religious school that my grandfather attended in Frankfurt, only transplanted to these shores. My father was a local photographer and had photographed, filmed, and recorded many local events. I began to share his material online and eventually started a project aimed at collecting the stories of the community and artistically presenting them. It consists of a YouTube channel and several websites. I have also employed social media to engage community members and learn from them in an open forum. I would like to use my project as a prototype to inspire others to research and document communities further.

The Scope of my interest includes:

Collection of liturgy: Searching for rare recordings, sheet music, and oral traditions and disseminating the material to a niche audience in several continents. One key aspect of my work is creating community mini-documentaries. In my research of local synagogues, many of which have been closed for decades, I focus on the personal stories within the synagogue's history. I scour the archives for names of former members and dignitaries, search for their offspring, and collect photos and stories. If I encounter a personal interest story, I give it its own segment, bringing these stories to life for a wider audience. At some point, I began adding annotated scripts to all my videos, including sources and context for some of the research.

Oral histories and interviews: Over the years, I have located persons of interest and interviewed them to collect oral histories and expert perspectives on topics relating to German Jewish culture and thought. These segments were sometimes part of a series on a topic or a community and occasionally stand-alone segments. I have a collection of antiques, books, and ephemera. I have built up a small personal library of rare books and all the "essential reading" on German Jewish history and thought. This includes books on this community's American experience, publications, newsletters, yearbooks, and recordings. Separately, I have books on Jewish communities in almost all fifty states.

Links to some of my notable online offerings:

Professionally remastered 16mm film with audio on the history of the Breuer community. It includes rare footage of the synagogue (Friedberg Anlage) in FFAM.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkoV5fCmos8>

In the series on Congregation Ohav Sholaum, I had the opportunity to take the life of a beloved cantor and Hebrew School teacher and bring it to life in a most emotional string of interviews:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EK-zbGJVmyM>

At great personal expense, I retrieved footage from an archive of the Shaarei Hatikvah Choir's 1956 appearance on a nationally televised talent show. After sharing the footage, I followed up with interviews of the choir members' children and one surviving member. They bring that night to life with much nostalgia and context. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ1uW0KoZtE>

Manny quills have been broken over Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's strictly Orthodox embrace of German culture and Bildung. After interviewing modern thinkers of the Hirschian school, I present my unique angle on the practice of Hirschian thought in his own community today. I show the irony in how many in his 19th-century community worked for the significant commodity firms in Frankfurt and how, in the 1980s, a significant shift took place as the German Jewish commodity firm of Phillip Brothers in New York employed many young people of the Breuer community.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zm3DEK0EqBY>

A rare recording of a sermon by Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer. Only two recordings of his sermons exist.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygf_LDacPtY

A short bio on the German Jewish artist Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, followed by an interview with an aspiring, award-winning filmmaker in modern-day Hanau who produced a film on Oppenheim.
<https://youtu.be/QCcqIU06jis?si=lKO50jYzkvQ42DSf>