

SANKT OTTILIEN – The Benedictine Monastery and its Jewish History, 1945–48



A project by the Institute of Jewish History and Culture, History Department, Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU), St. Ottilien Archabbey, and the Jewish Museum Munich

The Yiddish poet Leivick Halpern (known as H. Leivick) wrote that Jewish children and the sound of church bells greeted him upon his arrival at

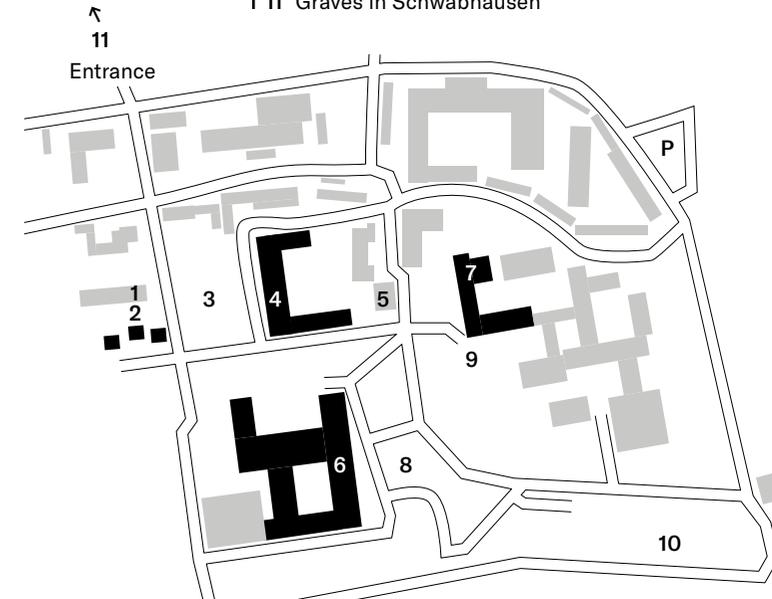
St. Ottilien in the spring of 1946. Between the years 1945 and 1948, the monastery of the Missionary Benedictines was an involuntary destination for more than 5,000 Jewish survivors from Eastern Europe. Behind these people lay the atrocious experiences of the Shoah, ahead of them an uncertain future. St. Ottilien offered them an idyllic setting, well-equipped medical facilities, and an adequate supply of food produced by its own farmlands. It became a place to convalesce and recuperate, but also to wait and hope. The three-year history of the Jewish presence at the Catholic monastery began in late April 1945 when the Allies bombed what they thought was a German military transport train that, unbeknownst to them, was full of trapped Jewish concentration camp prisoners being shipped from the Kaufering satellite camps. The injured survivors of that attack were brought to the German military hospital that had existed at St. Ottilien since 1941, where about a thousand German soldiers were also being treated at the time.

Civilians who found themselves outside their home countries because of the war were labeled Displaced Persons (DP) by the Allied armed forces. Gradually, St. Ottilien developed into a Jewish DP hospital that included a DP camp and a maternity ward, in which more than 400 Jewish children were born. The patients and convalescents were under the care of German doctors and nurses, nuns and monks, and also an increasing number of Jewish caregivers. The survivors quickly set up the institutional structures, conducted primarily in Yiddish, that were needed for everyday life: a prayer room, a kindergarten and yeshiva, a kosher kitchen, athletic and chess clubs, occupational training courses, and political parties. The camp orchestra of St. Ottilien became famous and performed at the DP camps throughout the American occupational zone. At the same time, the first medical director of the hospital, Dr. Zalman Grinberg, became one of the leading figures of the Jewish self-administration in Bavaria.

In the summer of 1945, the monastery, which the National Socialists had confiscated years before, was turned back over to the Benedictine Order. Gradually, monks returned from their forced labor and military service assignments. But the situation that they faced upon their return was not an easy one: housing was in short supply and exercising religious duties was difficult to the point that conflict with the American military government, Jewish self-administration, and international relief organizations became nearly inevitable.

This unique time immediately after the war was characterized by the encounter of religions, the interaction between the Jewish DPs and the local German population, and the rhythm of daily life at the DP hospital and camp. Until now, this has been a little-known chapter in the history of the monastery, but in 2018 it is the focus of a varied program of activities.

- 1 Maternity ward (today a guest house)
- 2 Housing for medical staff (today private housing)
- 3 Administration center (no longer existing)
- 4 Hospital 1 (today a guest house)
- 5 Kindergarten and yeshiva (today a residential home)
- 6 DP camp and staff housing (the monastery)
- 7 Hospital 2 (today a daycare center)
- 8 Prayer room and library (no longer existing)
- 9 Concert plaza
- 10 Cemetery
- 11 Graves in Schwabhausen



PROGRAM **Installation at the Jewish Museum Munich***featuring work by the Israeli artist**Benyamin Reich, Berlin*

In connection with International Museum Day 2018 and its theme “Hyperconnected Museums: New Approaches, New Publics,” the Jewish Museum Munich presents an installation that will send visitors on an exploratory tour of the Benedictine monastery as seen from a new, namely Jewish, perspective.

Location: Jewish Museum Munich**Opening on International Museum Day with guided tours:** May 13, 2018**More information at** www.museumstag.de**Dates:** May 13, 2018–September 23, 2018**Exhibition and Tour at St. Ottilien**

New outdoor signs which can be found throughout the monastery grounds indicate how the church property was used as a Jewish Displaced Persons hospital and camp. The exhibition in the gallery of the monastery shop expands upon certain aspects of St. Ottilien's history in the period from 1945 to 1948.

Location: Gallery of the monastery shop, St. Ottilien**Opening:** June 10, 2018, at 2 p.m.**Dates:** June 10–September 23, 2018

Guided tours of the monastery grounds and the gallery exhibition are offered on the following dates in 2018:

July 8, August 5, and September 9, always at 2 p.m.

Meeting point: information board at the parking lot/restaurant.**Duration:** 90 minutes. Participation is free.

Registration mandatory: fuehrungen.jmm@muenchen.de or by phone +49 89 288 516 423, at the latest by the Thursday prior to each tour. The arrangement of additional dates is possible.



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SYMPOSIUM

An international symposium will take place at St. Ottilien on June 10–12, 2018, that will turn scholarly attention to major aspects of DP history at the St. Ottilien monastery. In addition to the history of the hospital itself (starting in 1941), other topics on the symposium's agenda will include the biographies of notable individuals, the communal life shared by the various groups, the daily life in the DP camp, the religious and cultural life of Jews at St. Ottilien, and the paths of migration and personal histories of children.

Program: www.sankt-ottilien.org**Information, contact:** evita.wiecki@lrz.uni-muenchen.de**CONCERT**

The series of events will conclude with a concert held at the historic location to commemorate the liberation concert performed by survivors in May 1945 at St. Ottilien. This concert will feature a guest performance by the solo violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter.

Location: St. Ottilien Archabbey of the Missionary Benedictines**Date:** September 23, 2018, 3 p.m. (start of Sukkot)

Tickets and information at: www.ammerseerenade.de; info@ammerseerenade.de

IMPRESSUM

A project by the Institute of Jewish History and Culture, History Department, Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU), St. Ottilien Archabbey, and the Jewish Museum Munich

Under the patronage of Charlotte Knobloch, President of the Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria
Concept and Project Management: Evita Wiecki (LMU), Jutta Fleckenstein (Jewish Museum Munich), Father Cyrill Schäfer (St. Ottilien Archabbey)

Assistance: Marie Wallis**Research:** Carolin Piorun, Julia Schneidawind, Mirjam Spandri, Lara Theobalt and Jakob Liebig**Translation:** Dona Geyer**Exhibition Design:** Lendler Ausstellungsarchitektur, Berlin**Exhibition Setup:** Sabine Menges**Graphic Design:** Rimini Berlin**ADRESSES****Jewish Museum Munich**

St.-Jakobs-Platz 16, 80331 München

www.juedisches-museum-muenchen.de

tel.: +49 89 288 516 423

fuehrungen.jmm@muenchen.de**Opening hours:** Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.**Closed:** Sept. 11 (Rosh Hashanah) and Sept. 19, 2018 (Yom Kippur)**St. Ottilien Archabbey**

86941 St. Ottilien

www.erzabtei.de, tel.: +49 8193 71 711**Opening hours for the gallery in the monastery store:**

Monday–Friday 10–12 a.m. and 1:30–5 p.m.

Saturday 10–12 a.m. and 1:30–4 p.m.

Sundays and Holidays 10:30 a.m.–4 p.m.

Free entrance

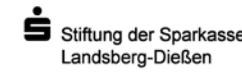
Travel directions to St. Ottilien

By train: Regional trains and commuter trains (S 4 in the direction of Geltendorf) run from Munich to Geltendorf on a regular basis. From Geltendorf station it is an approximately 30-minute walk to the monastery on a signposted footpath. As an alternative to walking, a regional train departs from Geltendorf once an hour for the St. Ottilien station.

By car: Coming from the east: Take highway A96 in the direction of Lindau to Exit 28 Windach, then head in the direction of Eresing/St. Ottilien. The turn-off to St. Ottilien is between Eresing and Geltendorf. Coming from the west: Take highway A96 in the direction of Munich to Exit 27 Schöfelfelding, toward Eresing, and head in the direction of Geltendorf until the turn-off to St. Ottilien.

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been shown at various museums and galleries in Israel and Germany, often deals with the Jewish past and present and with intercultural exchange and interaction.

The installation at the Jewish Museum Munich presents the work of the Israeli artist Benyamin Reich, who currently lives in Berlin. Originally from a Hassidic family, Reich studied art and photography at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem. His work, which has already

Benedictine monk with the Talmud printed in 1946 in St. Ottilien, Benyamin Reich, Berlin / Jewish Museum Munich

Contact: Jewish Museum Munich, St.-Jakobs-Platz 16, 80331 München, www.juedisches-museum-muenchen.de

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