

Siegfried Levi as Lord of the Castle

By Friedrich Eisenmann

Preface

Only few publications touch on the history of Stettenfels Castle in the 19th and 20th centuries. In my research, I had to go further back to as many sources as possible in an attempt to clarify a number of errors that had crept into the publications to date. These included liberties with dates (for example, in the guide to the exhibit Von J. SIGLE & Cie. zur MARKE SALAMANDER", Kornwestheim 2011, p. 49). Even the guide to Untergruppenbach's local history, *Heimatbuch der Gemeinde Untergruppenbach*, published in Stuttgart in 1992, and business website of Burg Stettenfels GmbH repeat the mistakes of earlier works.

About the person

[Caption] Siegfried Levi



On February 6, 1880, Siegfried Levi was born in Stuttgart, the tenth child of Raphael Levi and his wife Mathilde, née Ottenheimer. Like his brothers Max, Sem and Arthur, Siegfried also worked in the leather and shoe business and spent his apprentice years in America – “the most progressive country in industrial shoe production at that time.” The Levi brothers were primarily responsible for sales at the shoe company J. Sigle & Cie. When Salamander AG was founded in 1930, the Sigle and Levi families each held half of the shares in the business. Siegfried Levi was a member of the supervisory board along with his brothers Sem and Arthur. In addition, he owned the Luwal AG shoe factory in Luckenwalde and held an interest in the shoe company Württembergische Schufabrik GmbH in Faurndau. He alternated between his residences in Berlin and Stuttgart.

According to the police register, Siegfried Levi and, later, his wife Hedwig Kyanowski took up residence at Stettenfels Castle in Untergruppenbach on September 12, 1924. An addition to the family arrived on March 21, 1925; daughter Margit Kyanowski was born in Berlin. Born out of wedlock, with the marriage of the parents on May 20, 1926, the daughter became legitimate. Young Margit started school in Untergruppenbach in 1931. According to the roster of pupils, she was held back by schoolmaster Hungerbühler on January 1, 1932. In fact, she had moved to Stuttgart with her mother. Daughter Violet (born in 1907) was also declared legitimate in 1923, though through a request submitted by Levi, and also lived at Stettenfels Castle from time to time. In 1926, she married Paul Weil here, a businessman from Mannheim.

Siegfried Levi emigrated with his family in 1937. He bought the farm “Ravensburg West” in Southwest Africa (now Namibia, territory of the Völkerbund under administration of the South African Union since 1918). He died in Johannesburg on October 13, 1954.

Since the 1990s, there has been a Siegfried-Levi Street in Untergruppenbach.

About the “property”

Throughout the 900-year history of the town of Untergruppenbach and the Stettenfels estate, there have been no Jews in the picture – with a single exception: in 1924, Siegfried Levi from Stuttgart bought the estate of Stettenfels Castle.

Stettenfels estate had a very eventful history of ownership, beginning with its first mention in written records in 1277 when the Masters of Weinsberg – always strapped for cash – transferred ownership to Ludwig, Count Palatine, for 300 *Pfund Heller*¹. During the Palatine years, it was owned by the lords Hirschhorn, Sturmfeder, Helmstatt and Adelsheim. The estate fell to Württemberg during the War of the Landshut Succession. In 1507, Herzog Ulrich together with the hereditary marshal gave the property to his advisor Hans Thumb as a fiefdom. His son, Hans Conrad, in turn sold the property to Wolf Philipp von Hürnheim, who carried out the Reformation in 1536. In 1551, Anton Fugger bought the estate consisting of the towns of Untergruppenbach and Obergruppenbach and the hamlet of Donnbrunn. In 1747, Herzog Karl Fugen von Württemberg bought it and conferred ownership to the state of Württemberg.

¹ a 13th century German coin

[Caption] Postcard from the 20's.



[Caption] Inner courtyard of the castle: Left, officiant building. To the right of the entry gate, the arcade with walkway above.



Since the Fugger family moved out, the castle was used primarily for the estate farm. Even when the Gruppenbach township bought the castle in 1829, their interest was primarily agricultural (mainly the sheep barn and grazing rights for sheep).

From 1852 onward, the castle was owned by a series of private citizens. Some lived there at times, while others only conducted agricultural business on the estate's fields, pastures and vineyards.

The castle itself – its weir system originating in the Late Middle Ages, most likely at the time of Burkhard Sturmfeder (late 14th century) – was built for Duke Hans Fugger in 1576 (the year marked on the underside of the spiral staircase) and rebuilt in 1593–94 after damage from a fire. Wendel Dietrich from

Augsburg who frequently worked for the Fugger family was mentioned as the master builder. In 1727, Duke Ludwig Xaver Fugger commissioned his master builder, Franz Häffele, with the construction of the officiant building on the northern castle wall.

Lord of the castle, Walter Putsch, ordered major renovations beginning in 1901. The current gate structure, the arcade with enclosed hallway above located to the south of the inner courtyard (no longer in existence, though very similar to the structure in Löwenstein Castle destroyed in World War II), and the fountain in the castle courtyard were built during the time he lived in the castle with his wife. Renovations to the building's interior can no longer be determined. The agricultural facilities outside the castle walls (located in the current "Schlosspark" (castle park) and eastward) were established or renovated at this time (stable, dairy barn, machinery and grain shed, pig sty, cart shed, capstan building, poultry house, greenhouse).

A new lord at Stettenfels Castle

"By contract dated May 24, 1924, the heirs of Mrs. von Haldenwang (widow of Colonel von Haldenwang), deceased in December 1923, as owners of the region's castle estate, sold it to Mr. Siegfried Levi, manufacturer in Stuttgart, and Gustav Bücheler, farmer in Stuttgart, for GM² 200,000." This stems from an entry in the town council minutes from June 5, 1924.

On June 26, 1924, the following entry was made to the commercial register of the Heilbronn local court: „Schloßgutverwaltung Stettenfels, Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung³ domicile in Untergruppenbach. Articles of association dated June 23, 1924. The business purpose of the company is the management of the agricultural assets, in particular the Stettenfels Castle estate. The share capital totals GM 5,000. Managing director: Bücheler, Gustav, agronomist in Stuttgart."

Gustav Bücheler lived in the Feuerbacher Heide area of Stuttgart and operated the zoological gardens at Doggenburg for 25 years. In financial terms, he was not as well off as Levi. He was only able to contribute GM 1,000 to the share capital while Levi contributed the remaining GM 4,000.

The town council minutes quoted above also contains the following: "Although the sales price may be below the value of the estate, the relatively low purchase price is appropriately supported by the benefits of some contractual terms, as well as the presently difficult financial situation expected to last for some time, in conjunction to the urgent need to dissolve the community of heirs in consideration of the joint administration of the castle estate."

The "benefits of the contractual terms" refer to payment of GM 120,000 to the heirs immediately upon conveyance of the title to the property; the remaining GM 80,000 would be paid in four equal annual installments. Otto von Haldenwang was the one of four siblings who still lived in the castle and tried to take care of managing the estate. From the remarks included in the minutes, the conclusion can be drawn that his sisters and their spouses had little confidence in him.

² Goldmark

³ a limited liability estate management company

So, what exactly was sold? The purchase agreement listed a total of 124 properties ranging in size⁴ from 22 hectares, 75 ares and 97 m² to 168 m², either with buildings or “barren,” pastures, fields and vineyards, a total of 76 hectares, 51 ares and 16m².

The list mentions the following buildings: Castle building, towers, walls and courtyard, residence (the hunter’s house) with annex, walls and courtyard, building no. 15 (1), field barn in the rabbit fields (or “Hasenäcker field barn), building no. 156 (1), field barn in Neugereut, building no. 1, pump house below the castle, building no. 3, stable, grain shed, machinery shed and courtyard, building 4 a, b, c stable with ancillary buildings and courtyard.

“Sale includes all livestock and equipment, including stocks for agricultural operations if owned by the seller, excluding the furnishings owned by the seller for personal use.”

A seven-page inventory list organized by utility rooms, provides insight: in the cellar, there is a wine press, 10 vats, 4 tubs, a fruit mill, a manual grape crusher, spraying canisters and sulfur canisters. A “crane with elevator” is stored in the workshop, along with a Landau carriage, a Victoria carriage, a small carriage, a flat carriage and a “complete sleigh with furs”. In the wine cellar, there are 16 barrels with a total capacity of 14,826 liters, though no information is provided on whether there are contents or not. The agricultural operations consist of one rooster and 39 hens (purebred), one bee house with five colonies, two pigs, two sheep and two cows. That may seem to be relatively little, but it should be said that the properties were almost all leased out, mainly to the Heilbronn sugar factory.

After Otto von Haldenwang had vacated his residence, as contractually agreed, on September 1, 1924, renovation and furnishing of the castle building began. Reports about this period are unfortunately only vague, and there are (as yet) no written accounts. In the partial decision passed down by the compensation court of the Stuttgart district court, the work was described as follows: “After taking ownership of the properties, the applicant installed in the castle a central heating system, a large hunting hall and tiled bathrooms with marble bathtubs, among other things. The roof was also retiled and other extensive repair projects were carried out. According to claims made by the applicant, the investment in the castle amounted to approximately RM⁵ 400,000. In the assessment of the former mayor Luick, the applicant had invested RM 200,000–300,000 into the castle.” Contemporary witness Robert Bauer wrote the following about it in Heimatbuch Untergruppenbach: “The rooms of Stettenfels Castle were exquisitely furnished ...”

Several years ago at the request of the Untergruppenbach local heritage society, former stable hand Paul Stöffler (1915-2001) recorded everything he could recall about the work he did for Siegfried Levi. According to his statement, Mrs. Levi occupied the room over the entrance gate, Mr. Levi stayed adjacent to her in the corner room. These were also the preferred living quarters of the Haldenwang family – understandably so, as the entrance gate with its structure was only built in the early 20th century under Dr. Putsch, so it was certainly no “ancient stonework”.

⁴ 1 hectare = 100 ares, 1 are = 100 m²

⁵ Reichsmark

Estate manager Gottlob Glasbrenner lived with his family on the second floor of the officiant building connected to the west. Below him, at least for some time, lived the managing director of the estate, Major Konrad Wilhelm Wiedemann, ret., along with his wife. The show stables were first located on the ground floor below that. The shed (sleigh, coach, car) was located in the main castle building. What is today the Fuggersaal was originally divided up into guest rooms (that was even the case during the Fugger era); Siegfried Levi had it rebuilt as a hunting hall.

The occupants of the remaining rooms in the transverse block and on that side of the castle moat in the so-called huntsman's cottage (also referred to as the hunter's house or the forester's house) are no longer known.

The new lord of the castle jumped right into the social life of his new home community. For him, being involved meant becoming a member of the choral society – he chose “Liederkranz”, the club of the local farmers rather than “Hoffnung”, considered to be the one frequented by socialists – and he also joined the veterans' association. His estate manager, Glasbrenner, was secretary of that association.

Due to the generous support he provided to the Liederkranz at the consecration of the flag on June 13, 1926, he was named as honorable member shortly thereafter. That celebration had generated a deficit as a result of the bad weather, and he generously paid off the balance. Even today, people still say that he also paid for the new flag, although unfortunately the rumor can not be substantiated.

As the lord of the castle, Siegfried Levi also fulfilled his role by giving gifts to the nursery school children at Christmas. A report on the subject, penned by Pastor Waldbauer in 1931, reads as follows: “... There is something else to report with respect to Christmas parties. On December 23, the nursery school attendants made their way up to the castle with their charges, followed by Schultheiß – that's right, the mayor – and pastor. The group traveled a bit slowly, but we still arrived on time for the Christmas gift exchange which Mr. and Mrs. Levi so generously and commendably held for the young ones of our town once again this year. Our little ones fell silent upon entering the large and beautiful rooms. How novel was the open fire in the fireplace where the logs crackled so merrily. And the room where the gift exchange was held with its enormous Christmas tree! But they bravely sang their songs and recited their poems. Then, beaming, they withdrew with their baskets filled. Anyone offered a look inside knew why so many children were wearing new shoes at Christmas, shoes that they were so very proud of.”

But it was not only the little ones, even the adults shared in the Christmas cheer. “The jobless and other needy members of our community also had reason to rejoice, those who – thanks to a substantial donation by Mr. Levi – were lucky enough to be considered. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our most sincere thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Levi on behalf of everyone for these donations and for everything else that they have done for the township during the year.

[Caption] Mayor Erwin Luick (term 1921-1939).



So it comes as no surprise to read the following entry in the town council minutes dated December 12, 1927:

“The current castle owner at Stettenfels, the manufacturer Siegfried Levi, has gained considerable prominence in the community through his public spirit proven many times over, in particular through the donations he has made both to the township as a whole and to individual needy residents of the community, and not least through the annual gifts given to our schoolchildren. Furthermore, in the opinion of the Chairman of the town council, we have a certain duty to grant honorary citizenship of the Untergruppenbach township to Siegfried Levi.

With a most gratifying unity of sentiment, the town council resolves in affirmation of the statement by the Chairman to name Mr. Siegfried Levi, the owner of Stettenfels Castle, an honorary citizen of the Untergruppenbach township ...”

In a meeting of the town council in 1925, a local representative suggested “erecting a monument to commemorate the members of this community who had fallen in war from 1914–1918 and the deceased”. He was able to announce at the same time: “In response to a petition submitted to this effect, the current castle owner has already promised an amount of RM 2,000 for this purpose.”

The war memorial was dedicated on November 6, 1927; Siegfried Levi donated the promised RM 2,000 on December 5. Erecting the entire monument with the surrounding site and acquisition of the land cost a total of RM 8,182.61.

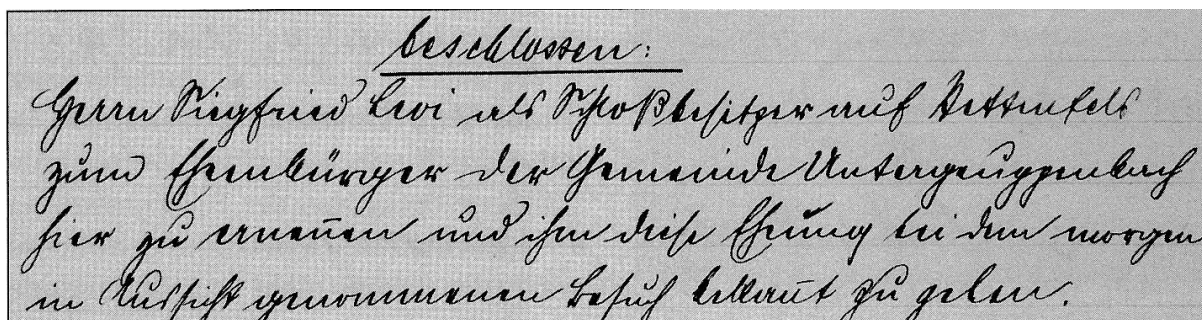
The people of Untergruppenbach were not the only ones who benefited from Siegfried Levi's generosity. The Abstatt township received "a donation from the lord of the estate and castle owner, manufacturer Siegfried Levi at Stettenfels [...] of the war memorial hewn in cast stone." In thanks for this, Levi was named an honorary citizen of that town on September 8, 1926, although not a resident of Abstatt. How did all of this transpire? On April 1, 1925, Levi leased "the field hunting rights for this and the Happenbach properties, excluding the estate of the Hofgut Vohenlohe" for GM 750 GM per year.

Eyewitness accounts recorded in the Abstatt guide to local history illustrate the entire event: "Contemporary witness Artur Kohler: I remember the first car that came from Levi of Stettenfels. It was an old, square box with curtains. Levi always came to the kirchweih⁶ in that car and paid for the carousel, and it was a sensation when he let the children spend half the day riding it. Or when he held the hunt, many hunters came here for the battue⁷. The children rode along, too, and he shot three hundred hares in Abstatt, and afterwards, there was a banquet in Waldhorn. We got home covered in blood and got a beating, too, once we arrived. But we were happy anyway because we were allowed to bring a hare home. We weren't paid for it, but we got to be there and take part."

On December 26, 1927, Siegfried Levi sent an invitation by postcard to attend a "battue on the Löwenstein grounds". The Untergruppenbach local heritage society has a postcard in its possession inviting the innkeeper of "Adlerwirt", Fritz Rieker to Steinsfelder Schlag on the 28th and to Stocksberg on the 29th. The succinct closing at the bottom of the card reads simply: "Whoever doesn't send regrets is coming! Huntsman's greetings" and bears a stamp rather than a signature. It is likely that a great number of these cards were sent out. The question remains as to whether he also leased the hunting rights to Löwenstein. There are no written documents to support this.

At the time, the rights to the Gruppenbach hunt were leased to the Heilbronn hotelier Eduard Daum, who generally preferred to take on a partner. In 1931, Levi obtained the rights to the entire hunt for RM 1,000 per year. That agreement was dissolved at the request of Levi in 1934, which was certainly in the interest of the town council (see below).

[Caption] Entry in the town council record of minutes.



Beschlossen:
Herr Siegfried Levi als Vorkäufer mit Abstatt
zum Frankfurter der Gemeinde Untergruppenbach
für zu erlauben und für die Fräulein in der morgen
in Abstatt zu erlauben und für die Fräulein zu geben.

⁶ A kirchweih is a parish festival.

⁷ Battue is a style of hunt in which game is flushed from the surrounding landscape by beaters.

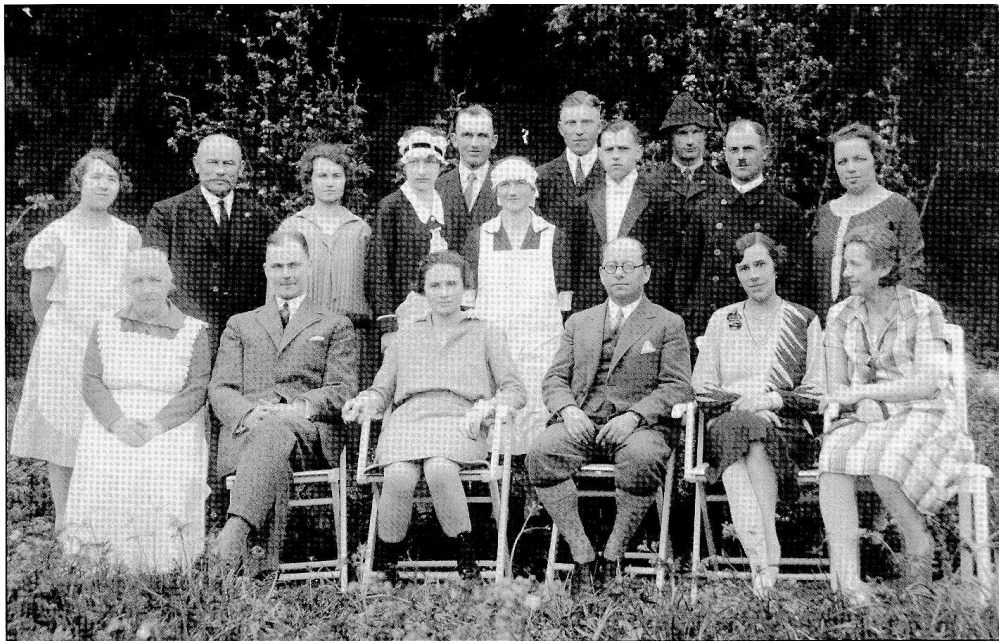
The stud farm

Besides hunting, Siegfried Levi had another passion, and that was horses. Even during the renovation of the castle, a tournament stable for 6 horses, a feed room and tack room were built on the ground floor beginning in 1924.

But the intention was for the facility to become a real stud farm. From 1928 to 1930, the agricultural buildings were renovated and expanded to include space for around 120 horses ranging from a breeding stallion to weanlings. The breeding barn also had apartments for the feed master, Amelungsen, and other stable staff. A covered riding arena with hot walker rounded out the facilities. An aerial photo from 1930, unfortunately blurry, shows the facility in the castle garden.

The new stud farm caused quite a sensation. On January 14, 1929, the newspaper *Schwäbische Merkur* wrote: "Württemberg has gained yet another stud farm. Mr. Siegfried Levi at his castle in Stettenfels near Heilbronn a. N. has founded a stud farm that aims to produce first class tournament horses. To achieve this, valuable acquisitions were made in the realm of the Hanoverian breed. In recent weeks Mr. Levi bought two mares in foal, three outstanding looking and well-bred three-year old fillies, and two colts. [...] The stud farm is registered as a breeding stable with the Imperial Warmblood Federation. Purebred Fürst Popoff, renowned from the racetrack, was put in place as the stud. The stud farm will already be represented with three young horses at this month's tournament in Berlin.

[Caption] The lord of the castle with his spouse Hedwig (seated in the middle), beside managing director Major Wiedemann, ret.; at rear left, estate manager Gottlob Glasbrenner; at rear right, chauffeur Otto Arent with his wife Helene. Photo from 1928.



The newspaper *Neckar-Zeitung* reported on May 20, 1931: "The Heilbronn Cavalry Club visited the Stettenfels stud farm. [...] Castle owner Levi offered to open the doors of the famed stud farm for a tour

of the facility with around 130 horses under the management of riding instructor Meiser. With the exception of the dressage horses, all others were outside in large, fenced-in paddocks divided by age. [...] With their magnificent size and appearance, the animals were a rare delight to behold. In the stalls, the noble and magnificent riding horses, including a number of “big winners”, made an exquisite impression. In a large riding arena of modern design, the young horses are trained for their future tasks by hard-working riders. One has the immediate and pleasant impression of order and cleanliness throughout the stalls and the riding facilities.

Over the course of the global economic crisis, however, the stud farm seems to have fallen upon hard times. Around 1932, most of the horses were sold (certainly at below value) to the mounted police in Stuttgart and to the Sturmabteilung⁸ riding school in Cannstatt. At least this was what Paul Stöffler recalled. Business documents are no longer in existence.

[Caption] War memorial on the main street; behind that the parsonage.



The end of Levi's era

The global economic crisis is likely also the reason why Levi suddenly put part of the castle estate property up for sale in 1931. Another reason was the end of the lease with the Heilbronn sugar factory. That lease had covered all properties to the right of the street leading to Happenbach, around 150 acres (approximately 50 hectare). Levi hired a broker to auction off the parcels. The higher authority, in this case the Heilbronn city administration, was not opposed to a sale, although the town council certainly was. They feared that “the demand for the often hard-to-cultivate farmland, such as comprised a good portion of this part of the estate, would not be strong in this town, and it was rather to be feared that a significant share [...] would go to outsiders. On the other hand as well, breaking apart the castle estate was not in the town's best interest...” Levi didn't heed these objections and even an intense correspondence with Mayor Luick – each exchange growing testier – was of no avail. The properties were auctioned off – at well below their value in the opinion of the mayor – and the township now had to deal with the problem of access roads within the area sold. Levi seems to have run out of cash, as the

⁸ The Sturmabteilung was the armed and uniformed branch of the NSDAP.

costs of surveying and marking the new added roadways joining the now fragmented parcels were only fully paid at the end of 1933. And only then could the titles to those areas be transferred.

In the meantime, Siegfried Levi moved out of Castle Stettenfels to Stuttgart on March 15, 1932. During the negotiations for compensation in 1951, Levi's attorneys provided the following reason: "In 1932, the applicant moved to Stuttgart. He did not do so because he no longer valued Stettenfels, but because an attack against him had appeared in the Nazi gazette published in Heilbronn in 1932. He feared that he would be subjected to personal attacks in the event that the Nazis came to power."

[Caption] Entrance area with castle bridge and gate.



[Caption] Right, castle building, the huntsman's cottage, the stables are hidden behind the trees, riding arena with its barrel-vaulted roof clearly visible.

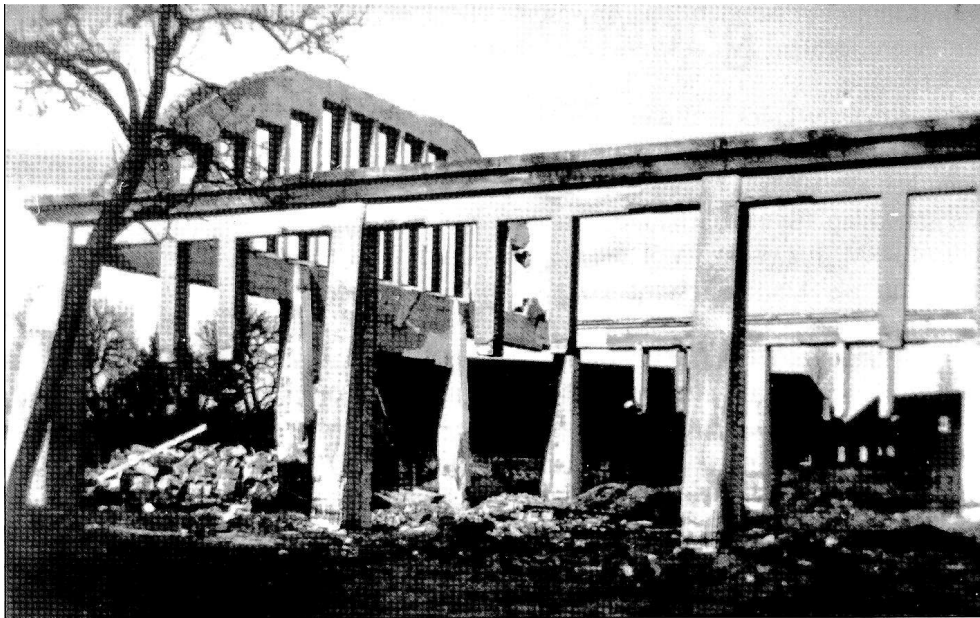


Three days after the appointment of the new (standardized⁹) Untergruppenbach town council, the following was reported in the record of minutes on October 9, 1933: "A suggestion is proposed by members of the town council to revoke this township's honorary citizenship granted to the owner of the Stettenfels Castle estate, Siegfried Levi, residing in Stuttgart, on December 12, 1927.

By surrendering his residence at Stettenfels, and in particular as a result of his strange conduct on the occasion of the sale of part of the Stettenfels Castle estate, Levi has been unable to uphold the respect of the community as is required of an honorary citizen. Moreover, Levi is a non-Aryan. Conclusion: Revocation of honorary citizenship with immediate effect."

The new mayor of Abstatt, Lell, 'took back' Levi's honorary citizenship, "literally with the stroke of a pen, referring to an undocumented local council resolution dated February 27, 1934." Levi had already passed on the hunting rights at the end of 1933.

[Caption] The son-in-law of contractor Knoedler secretly photographed the demolition of the riding arena.



Siegfried Levi received a letter dated March 20, 1934, from the Heilbronn district leader of the NSDAP, Richard Drauz, announcing the second level of measures against undesirable persons: after deprivation of honor comes deprivation of property. The text is a stark portrayal of the disgraceful actions of the Nazis:

⁹ The town council was standardized in accordance with the Gleichschaltung laws, which establishing a system of control and coordination throughout society, also called "Nazification".

“The NSDAP intends to conduct training of the members of NSBO and the German Labor Front¹⁰, which explains why we have no other choice than to acquire a suitable property.

After everything that has been viewed in the realm of the Heilbronn city administration, no other property is suited for this good cause than Stettenfels Castle, which you once bought.

You must have been aware for many years that the NSDAP is built on the spirit of sacrifice and the readiness to make sacrifices for the greater good. The best proof of this is evident in the fact that the political leaders for many years have been carrying out their work in the party on a volunteer basis, and they continue to do so today.

Since you are being protected by the current state and the government, we are ready to presume that you, too, will not deny us your honorarium in the form of a generous donation for the “workers of the fist”. While we do not want to preempt your decision, we do expect that you will give us Stettenfels Castle with the surrounding properties as a magnanimous contribution to the movement.

Upon reading this letter, our request may seem unusual to you. However, in consideration of your previous activities, we trust that we can soon expect you to extend us this courtesy.

We look forward to your visit to discuss the aforementioned matter in the offices of the Heilbronner Tagblatt GmbH, Heilbronn, Adolf-Hitler-Allee 40, upon presentation of this letter.

With German regards,
signed Drauz
District leader.”

Pressure was now being exerted from various different sides. Mayor Luick was also involved, or was forced to take part. He drove to Stuttgart on two occasions to meet face to face with Levi for negotiations and obediently informed district leader Drauz: “... I had the impression that the question of price was the only thing standing in the way of our reaching an agreement...” Drauz wrote back: “In the matter of the purchase price, the price of RM 120,000.00 is still much too high. In further negotiations with the castle owner, you should therefore take this into account and make him understand that commercial exploitation is not the point when it comes to the NSDAP buying the castle, but rather that the estate is used for an ideal purpose.”

Mayor Luick then prepared an estimate of the actual value of the castle estate. The fire insurance estimate for the building came to RM 399,740. In the meantime, the city of Heilbronn was also interested in buying the property. On April 6, 1937, Luick met Levi in the Hotel Zeppelin in Stuttgart. Once again, no agreement was reached other than that interested buyers would be permitted to view the castle at any time. A short time later, Siegfried Levi left Germany with his family.

¹⁰ The National Socialist Factory Cell Organization (Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation, or NSBO) was the alternative to the union in Nazi Germany. The German Labor Front, or Deutsche Arbeitsfront, was the trade union organization.

His attorneys were then able to negotiate a price of RM 150,000 with the city of Heilbronn. On October 5, the purchase agreement was signed, and the transfer of title declared with immediate effect. Levi had actually intended to use the money to buy a farm in Southwest Africa (now Namibia) and had initially received approval from the foreign currency office in Stuttgart. But then, the foreign currency office demanded RM 185,000 from him in return for authorization to take RM 37,000 out of the country. The difference was to be "... withheld for the good of the Reich."

The city of Heilbronn sold Stettenfels Castle with around three and a half hectares of land to the NSDAP for RM 50,000 on June 22, 1939.

The end

The NSDAP wasted no time in beginning construction work. Two stable buildings and the riding arena were torn down, ostensibly to make room for construction of a shooting range. Building number 6 was renovated to include a four-room apartment for the estate manager. Garages were installed in the ground floor of the hunting lodge. The onset of World War II prevented any further changes.

On November 30, 1948, Siegfried Levi submitted a claim for restitution to the Central Registration Office in Bad Nauheim. Because the claimant and the defendant (the city of Heilbronn and the state of Württemberg-Baden as the purported assignee of the NSDAP) were unable to reach an amicable agreement, the Stuttgart district court made a partial ruling on July 26, 1951. Under this ruling, the city of Heilbronn was to return the properties bought from Levi in 1937, and the state of Württemberg-Baden in turn as well. The purchase price at the time of the acquisition was to be repaid to each of the defendants. Since the exchange rate to the deutsche mark was now 1:10, these amounts were relatively low. Heilbronn was entitled to DM 11,744.86; DM 2,554.15 was due for the castle. Maximum amount mortgages were recorded for these amounts until the transaction was completed.

On July 15, 1957, Siegfried Levi's widow sold Castle Stettenfels for DM 140,000 to Dr. Friedrich Spieser, a publisher from Lich in Upper Hesse. This signaled the start of a new chapter in the castle's history.

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Local Protestant newspaper

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Frank Jakob Rudolf, Burg Stettenfels (Stettenfels Castle), Stuttgart 1958

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*Liederkranz Choral Society of Untergruppenbach, festschrift on the occasions of the 100th, 125th and
150th anniversaries in 1953, 1978 and 2004*

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Untergruppenbach e.V.)*