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Hi Roger,  
never done this before so I hope it works

Hilchenbach speech - November 1998

Good evening ladies and gentleman,

First of all, I would like to thank Herr Klaus Dieterman and Herr Reinhard Gamlich for organizing this evening. It is greatly appreciated by the descendents of Levi and Sophie Hollander. I would also like to thank Professor Roger Herz Fischler of Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, the son of Ruth Fischler (Hollander), one of Levi's oldest grandchildren who has recently started research on the Hollander family.

Who was Levi Hollander? Levi was the youngest of seven children born on 23rd August 1855 in Elsoff to Joseph and Rachel Hollander. Levi's grandfather was Wolf Hollander who lived in Elsoff civ 1770.

The tombstone of Joseph Hollander, Levi's father, can still be seen and read in the Jewish cemetery in Elsoff. Also, the house where Levi was born still exists and is in use today.

The first Jewish family to settle in Hilchenbach were the Hony family who came in 1869. Ten years later Levi Hollander (my grandfather) settled here with his wife, Sophie and two children. They bore another six children after settling here. The professions of these two families were butchers and feed store traders (Futter Handler). Later the Stern family settled here and after World War I, Karl Schaefer moved here. Karl married Levi's oldest daughter, Bianca, and opened a textile outlet in the center of town.

We know that Levi Hollander served in the German army from pictures we have of him in uniform. Three of his five sons also served in the army during World War I :

- Willy, who was in the German Hussars
- My father Hugo, who was a baker
- And Arthur, who died in World War I in France

We also know that Levi loved to sing and was very active in the choir. On Saturdays and holidays, the four Jewish Hilchenbach families - Hony, Hollander, Stern and Schaeffer - used to meet and pray in their homes. In 1899 they bought a piece of land, which is in Levi Hollander's name, to be used as a Jewish cemetery which can still be seen and visited today.

The last time I saw my grandfather was in 1933 when we visited him to celebrate his and Sophie's Diamond Wedding Anniversary.

We still have pictures of that occasion with my Uncle Willy and my grandfather in top hats and tails, myself in a long sailor's outfit. My grandmother was only half in the picture, which is most unfortunate.

My grandfather died in 1939 at the age of 88 and my grandmother died less than a year later in 1940 at the age of 85, both having lived in Hilchenbach for 60 years. My cousin, Lottie Haskel (Schaeffer) was 20 years old at the time and remembers arranging Levi's funeral. She mentioned that no Hearst were available for Jews but she managed to get a horse and wagon. Levi Hollander was laid to rest on 27th June 1939.

Shortly after Lottie managed to emigrate to England, being the last of the Jews to leave Hilchenbach alive. Hilchenbach had 35 Jewish inhabitants (Einwohner) made up of the families Hollander, Hony, Stern and Schaeffer. Ten of this group managed to leave Germany. Five, including my grandparents, died a natural death. The remaining twenty were taken to concentration camps never to be heard from again.

What happened to Levi Hollander's descendents who remained in Hilchenbach?

- 28th April 1942. Josef , (Levi's oldest son) and his wife, Julia were deported to KZ in Zamosc, Poland with their son Arthur.
- 28th April 1942. Karl Schaeffer and his wife Bianca, ne Hollander (my cousin Lottie's parents) were also deported to Zamosc, Poland.
- 27th February 1943. Willy Hollander (the uncle I was in a photo with) and his son, Alfred were requested to report to Dortmund. The following day his wife, Elisabeth and another son, Lothar also had to report to Dortmund and were sent to a destination unknown.

These were the last Jews to leave Hilchenbach.