

# JEWISH MUNICH

**Robert W. Case**

We visited Munich in August of 2003. The Jewish written history of Munich dates back to 1229, when “Abraham The Munichen” was the first Jewish resident to be mentioned in a property deed. There is little mention of Jews until 1285, when a rumor started that Jews killed a gentile child, and 180 Jews were killed by a rabid mob over the incident. However, during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries there were many *pogroms* until **Albert III** of Bavaria expelled all the Jews in 1442, and converted the Synagogue into St. Mary’s church.

For the next 3 centuries, there was no Jewish life in Munich, until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1790 there were 127 Jews living in Munich. In the early 1800’s “Court Jews”, who not only financed the court of Munich, but contributed as well to the development of Munich’s banking structure. On June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1813, the “*Jews edict*” was passed, which allowed Jews to acquire citizenship and estates. In 1826 a Synagogue was opened, and in 1848 the Jews gained the right to vote and to be elected for public office. In 1880 the *pogroms* in Russia resulted in an influx of eastern Jews to Munich, and opened up lucrative businesses in leather goods and fur trading.

In 1892, the **Ohel Jakob** synagogue was opened, which seated 1000 men and 800 women. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest synagogue in Germany.

The apex of Jewish life was just prior to WW I, with the Jewish population growing to 11,000 members, and 44 Jewish clubs. However, When the “*aryanization*” by the Nazi’s began, many Jews were “liquidated” And between 1933-1942, 7500 Jews emigrated to Palestine and the United States. In 1944, only 7 Jews remained in Munich.

Today the Jewish population is approximately 8,000, second only to Berlin. There are three Synagogues in Munich, a museum, a Jewish community center as well as a cultural center. A new and prestigious community center, school, and museum and synagogue, aptly named **Ohel Jakob**, after the first synagogue, is scheduled to start construction In 2003, and be completed in late 2005.

*Note: Three weeks after we visited Munich, on September 9, 2003, there was a group of Neo-Nazis arrested by the Munich police for planning a massive bombing attack on the construction site of the new Synagogue. Four of the suspects were linked to skinhead groups, and some had previously served time in jail for violent crimes. Three Islamic terrorists, members of the Islamic terror cell **Al Tawahid**, were also arrested for planning attacks on Jewish targets.*

Prior to our arriving in Munich, we attempted to make contact with the Jewish community via the Internet (*In all our previous travels, this method usually is successful*) this time we were “shot down” with the rather curt reply that “they are really too busy running the summer day camp, etc.” Undaunted, when we arrived in Munich, we decided to go the Jewish Museum and synagogue, the hours of operation being “Monday – Friday, 2:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. Imagine our surprise when we arrived, the complex was **CLOSED!** In front of the museum, we met a Jewish man who had the key, but absolutely refused us admission, because they were closed for the national holiday. What holiday was it? “**Ascension Day!**” He said, “Come back on Sunday at 2:00 p.m.-we will be open then.”



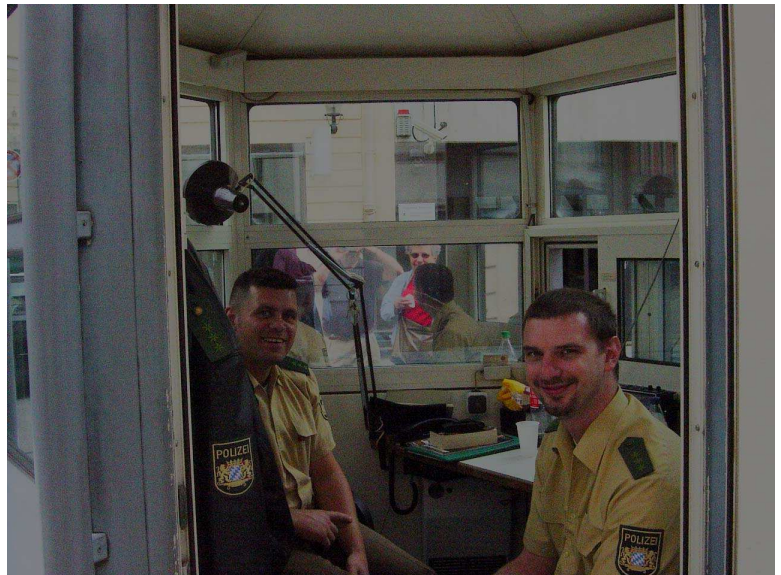
**In front of Munich Jewish Museum**

**photos by Robert W. Case Aug. 2003**

When we returned on Sunday, the police told us they are NEVER open Sunday! (So much for that)



**Police Station in Front of Museum**



**Police 24/7 in police station**

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