

Stralsund, view of the Nikolaikirche (St. Nicholas' Church)



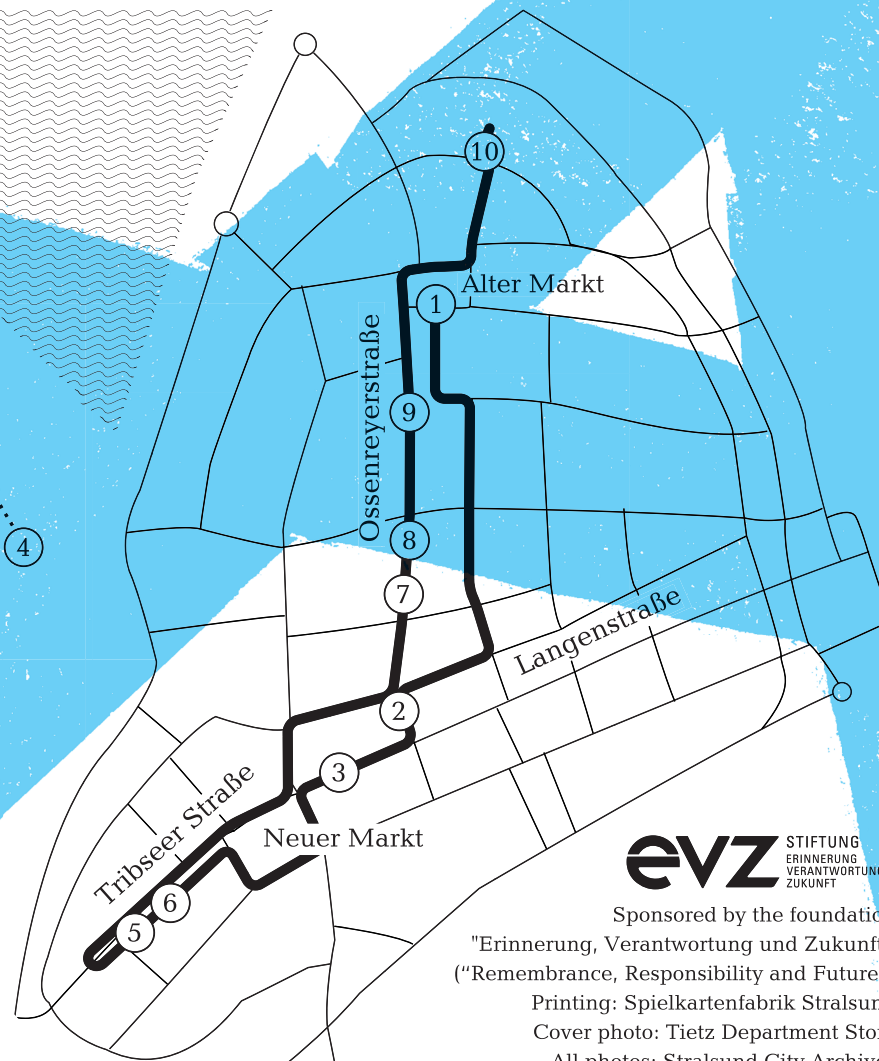
Wertheim Department Store



Stralsund

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On the trail

A city tour tracking the
Jewish history of Stralsund

Introduction

The Jewish community at Stralsund existed for more than 170 years in this Hanseatic city. With a synagogue that opened in 1787 and two Jewish cemeteries, the city became a central hub for the Jews of Pomerania. Jewish people stood out amongst the businessmen of the Hanseatic city, including the well-known Wertheim and Tietz families, who opened their first shops in Stralsund. It is due to these department store pioneers that Stralsund has earned the title as the cradle of the department store culture in Germany. The Jewish community enjoyed its heyday in the final years of the 19th century, when there were more than 170 members. The community saw its complete destruction as a result of the expulsion and murder of its members by the Nazis. Today, there remain only the Stolpersteine and commemorative plaques as reminders of the former Jewish community. This pamphlet, a project by the JONA school in 2013-2014, will guide you through the dramatic history of the Stralsund Jews as you make your way through a city tour that presents a piece of the city's history that is otherwise little known.

Stations along the tour

1. The Edict of 1777, The Old Market Square

In 1777 the first legal rights and obligations were set out for the Jewish people of Stralsund. The edict decreed by the Swedish king tolerated Jews for the first time in Stralsund and specified the rules by which they were to live; for example, they were permitted to freely, though not publicly, hold worship services.

2. Judenstraße ("Street of the Jews")

The Judenstraße, first described in 1401, provides the earliest information about the life of the Jewish people living in Stralsund. The inhabitancy of several Jews is reported from as early as 1236. In 1935, the name Judenstraße was changed to "Jodenstraße", as the local office of the NSDAP (National Socialist German

Workers' Party) was located here; it was not until 1990 that the name reverted to "Judenstraße".

3. The Stralsund Synagogue, Langenstraße 69

The synagogue was constructed in 1786 and consecrated the following year in Stralsund. It was considered the central gathering place for Jewish people. Once several refurbishments had been completed, the synagogue could hold more than 200 Jewish congregants, but the building was heavily damaged by the National Socialists in 1938 and until its destruction in an air raid in 1944 it was used for other purposes.

4. The Jewish Cemetery, Greifswalder Chaussee

It was not until 1855 that the Jewish people were able to inaugurate their own cemetery in Stralsund. Prior to that date, they had to bury their dead in Bad Sülze and after 1776 they were permitted a small plot in Niederhof near Stralsund. The cemetery on Greifswalder Chaussee has been converted into a memorial site that today can be visited by everyone.

5. The Stralsund Mint, Tribseer Straße 24

The Stralsund mint was established in 1757. Because contact between Jews and tradespeople was much appreciated and raw materials were required, it was hoped that the mint would attract Jewish people to the city. As a result, some Jews were allowed to stay in Stralsund, which generated a great deal of controversy. Once the mint was abandoned in 1763, several of the Jews were allowed to stay in the city.

6. The Gerson Family, Tribseerstraße 21–22

The Gerson family has lived and operated several businesses in Stralsund since 1735. They were expropriated in 1938 by the National Socialists and many of the family members were killed in the concentration camps.

7. The Keibel-Cohn Family, Ossenreyerstraße 21–22

The Keibel-Cohn family arrived in Stralsund in 1890. Following her husband's death in 1901, Martha Cohn continued to manage and expand the family's textile business. Her children and grandchildren received

an excellent education. Like so many other Jewish people, this family suffered persecution, deportation, forced labour and death under the Third Reich.

8. Kaufhaus Tietz (Tietz Department Store), Ossenreyerstraße 19

The Tietz family was an extremely successful Jewish family of the 19th and 20th centuries in Stralsund. Their department stores and formative concepts continue to make them one of the most notable families of the German retail sector even today. The Tietz family began their business under poor conditions but nevertheless saw their enterprise expand to several branches throughout Germany prior to the company's aryanisation.

9. The Wertheims, Ossenreyerstraße 8–12

The Wertheim family owned one of the largest department store groups in Europe. Beginning with Joseph Cohn (later renamed Joseph-Lewin Wertheim), the family gradually settled in Stralsund and in 1875 founded the first Wertheim department store there. The family introduced many innovative business principles, including the right of return, and soon expanded, until even their stores were expropriated by the National Socialists.

10. The Stele at Johanniskloster (Monastery of St. John)

The stele was erected in the Apollonienmarkt in 1988 to commemorate the Jewish community of Stralsund. Because it was befouled on several occasions, it now stands as a memorial in the former Johanniskloster.

Prepared as a part of a history project by the students of the JONA school in collaboration with the Förderverein Historische Warenhäuser Wertheim und Tietz in Stralsund e.V. (Wertheim and Tietz Department Store Historical Society Foundation)