

## **The Davidsons, three generations of Jewish entrepreneurs in Dörverden Insights into living conditions in Dörverden during the first half of the 19th century**

by Helmut Lohmann (Dörverden), Klaus Ortel (Langwedel)  
and Klaus Roschmann (Westen) \*

On August 4, 2008, Ms. Nili Davidson from Nahariya (port city in northern Israel) contacted the Dörverden community archive as part of her family research. Subsequently, a lively e-mail exchange began between the various members of the Davidson family, scattered around the world, the municipal archive, and the Verden district archive. That same month, Nili Davidson and her husband Yoram visited Dörverden, the place where the family's ancestors were apparently first mentioned in writing.

### **The three Dörverden Generations**

The Davidson family, based in Dörverden, goes back to Moses David, later also called Moses David Davidson. He was married to Goldchen Philippeon. They were protected Jews, i.e. Jews who were subject to the protection of a prince or an urban authority against payment of special taxes and enjoyed certain privileges over the majority of the Jews.

Moses David, according to a report by the Westen county office from 1813, held a trade license for Dörverden since 1793, according to which he was allowed to trade "*with animal skins, fabrics by the yard for the clothing of the female rural dwellers, ribbons of all kinds, silk and other cloths, sheets, silk and camel yarn*". In addition, he had "*taken care of the lottery collection<sup>1</sup> and done slaughtering<sup>2</sup>*". It has not yet been possible to determine whether David had already lived here before, or when and from where he moved here.

In 1828, Jews apparently had the option of "germanise" their names. The Davidson family is in possession of an original in which David Moses Davidson declared in April 1828 that he was keeping his name.

The marriage of Moses David and Goldchen Philippeon produced at least one son. He applied in 1830 for permission to operate a "*Hockenhandel*" (general store). More on this below. This son David Moses Davidson was born in 1794 and died in 1869. He stayed in Dörverden and with his wife Marianne, née Weingarten, fathered 12 children. Marianne was probably descended from the Isaak Salomon Weingarten family, who lived in Bruchhausen in 1827 and previously in Schwarme (around 1816), where they ran tanneries and agriculture and traded in goods similar to those of Moses David<sup>3</sup>.

In March 1855, the Davidson/Weingartens concluded a retirement partitioning agreement (*Altenteilsvertrag*) with their eldest son "*Moses Davidson, thereat, 29 years old*" and handed over the Dörverden farmstead No. 45 and all business to him. This grandson of Moses David soon moved to Hildesheim and then to Braunschweig. He was born on February 2, 1826, married to Emma née Traube and died at the age of 81 on April 4, 1907 in Braunschweig<sup>4</sup>. His address is stated as: Maschstraße 32 a. For more on this Moses Davidson, see below.

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1\*Addresses: Helmut Lohmann, Sandhof 8, 27313 Dörverden  
Klaus Ortel, Am Mühlenbach 16, 27299 Langwedel  
Klaus Roschmann, Amtsstraße 11, 27313 Dörverden-Westen  
Collecting lottery bid money

2 Kreisarchiv (district archive) Verden (KAV) 6/137e

3 KAV 6/137e

4 City archive Braunschweig, death record Nr. 645/1907 of the Braunschweig civil registry office

## First attempts at land acquisition

From 1817, Moses David tried to get a permit to buy a house in Westen, namely for the house of the "Kreis Controlleur Godduhn", a small grower farm site (property name at that time Hellmers, current-day address: Hauptstraße 35). The purchase price is "1860 Reichsthaler in pistols of 5 Reichsthaler". M. David is judged in a Westen county report "as a rightly good man who is well acceptable as a colonus". The office recommends that approval (for the consummated purchase) be granted<sup>5</sup>. However, the conditions stipulated by the "Königlich Großbritannienisch Hannoverschen Cammer" (Royal British Hanoverian Chamber) when it approved in May 1821 are so unfavorable for M. David that he cancels the purchase of Godduhn's site (Westen No. 35).<sup>6</sup>

Moses Davidson (this is how his surname is used as of this time, at the latest) was admitted as one of three bidders in 1828 at the auction of *Anbauerstelle*<sup>7</sup> (grower stead) Dörverden No. 104 (formerly known as the "Hailshornsche Stelle", nowadays: Große Str. 51). At 770 thaler gold, his offer is the second highest bid. The winning bid was that of blacksmith Wilhelm Koch, despite being the lowest at 760 thaler gold. He had declared that he wanted to continue operating the smithy previously operated on site, as a blacksmith. Therefore the county Westen preferred Koch<sup>8</sup>. However, in 1837 Davidson succeeded in acquiring the now available *Kötnerstelle* (cottage site) 45 (presently Große Straße 45), recently released by the previous owner and now free of feudal dues<sup>9</sup>. More on this below.

## Protection money

The class of protected Jews, to which the Davidson family belonged, was only allowed to settle in specific locations. They had to raise and pay the state authorities a certain amount for their protection<sup>10</sup>. The district archive at 7 / 27-14 contains two documents with statements about Davidson. One is an invoice for the period from July 1834 to July 1835, according to which the amount of the protection money amounts to 5 Reichsthaler and 17 Gute Groschen and the derived contribution to the State Rabbinical Fund amounts to 2 Rthl. (Reichsthaler), 10 ggr. (Gute Groschen) and 6 Schilling Courant. In addition to Davidson, Wolf Moses and Salomon Hammerschlag are also listed as Jews residing in Dörverden in the list ("*Liquidation*") of the contributions due for the period mentioned.

The second document, dated December 10, 1837, is about the correction of faulty accounting for 1833/34 and 1834/35, which also affects Davidson.

## General store

After 30.4.1830 Moses Davidson Jr., with the help of the Westener "*Advocat*" (lawyer) Nordmeyer, seeks to obtain approval from the *Landdrostei* (Hanover Government) to open a "general store" (*Hockenhandel*)<sup>11</sup> in Dörverden. In the application he points out the following: "My father had been granted protection for 30 years until his death, and I have enjoyed the protection granted graciously for 11

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5 KAV 6/137c

6 KAV 5/436a Nr. 35

7 Ranking of village property owners: 1. Meyerhöfe, 2. Kötner 3. Brinksitzer and Anbauer.

8 KAV 5/297 Nr. 104

9 Real estate property at the time was not necessarily free as we know it nowadays. It was bound to a feudal overlord, whom the site owner owed payments in money or goods, and/or service (such as a number of journeys of work). Dispensation from these bonds was possible at this time.

10 More information on protected Jews on various websites.

11 The term „Höker“ (not with „ck“) is still known, although hardly used anymore. As per Wikipedia entry "Händler" (as of Mar 6, 2016) the word originates from Middle High German *hucke* = peddler's burden. The term "Höcker" as used here denotes retail of small everyday use items ("which are indispensable to the peasant in his household"), although with some limitations, e.g. as seen in the section on brandy.

years and made a living<sup>12</sup> on the trade of cloth by the yard<sup>13</sup>." He points out that besides his mother he had to feed his wife and six children and that the Dörverdeners asked him to start a general store because in Dörverden "there is only a single store" and that, because of the frequent flooding, the Dörverdeners could not buy abroad. The only merchant sets the prices at will because he has no competition. Dörverden, with 128 hearths (dwellings) and again as many in the villages belonging to the parish could sustain several merchants. Four stores were said to have coexisted in Dörverden in the past. Statements regarding the legal assessment of the situation are also made in the application.

Interesting, In this context, are statements by the county Westen on the infrastructure, in an interim report dated May 10, 1830. It mentions that the Dörverden bailiwick comprises 275 hearths with 11 stores, 113 of them in Dörverden with 4 merchants, Stedorf 79 with 2 merchants and Westen with 5 merchants. In March 1832, Moses Davidson, with the support of the Dörverden community, again contacted the "Königlich Großbritannisch Hannoversche Landdrostey in Hannover" (Royal British-Hanoverian government in Hanover). The *Bauermeister* (provost) C. Mühlenkamp as well as the principals Hermann Otte, Heinrich Meyer, Friedrich Meyer, Wilhelm Rodewald and Heinrich Meyer and of course Davidson sign this "most deferential request" with reference to the application from April 1830, which had been rejected. Brought up are not only the factual circumstances that have changed, but also the changed views on the "concessions to be granted to protected Jews".

It is particularly emphasized that there is now only one general store in Dörverden and that the residents are dependent on this only one. And he can set the prices as he wants. It also says: "We the provost and the village leaders consider it our duty to put special emphasis on this point; the inhabitants of Dörverden are not so wealthy that they can afford purchasing the necessary daily goods in nearby towns in the long run, and therefore are forced to buy the wares from the only merchant in Dörverden more expensively than they could buy them in the Cities." It was expected that competition would lead to lower prices. Those currently buying abroad would also buy in the village again, so that the existing merchant could make even more profit with lower prices but higher sales. Furthermore, they give best reference for the protected Jew Davidson and request that the licence be granted.

In a report dated May 13, 1832 to the Landdrostei (Government), the county Westen reports that in older files there appear 3 merchants, in yet older ones 6, and in Stedorf 3. "Now Ludwig Schliemann is the only one doing business in Dörverden; in Stedorf as well, only 2 general stores remain. Merchant Schliemann obtains most of his goods from auctions in Bremen so some of the smaller items are said to be of poor quality; reportedly he gives his customers ample credit<sup>14</sup>, but also, as many residents of Dörverden and Stedorf claim, because he is the only one, his prices are high, and raised and lowered arbitrarily. A hence desirable commercial competitor has so far been completely lacking."

On May 21, 1832, the Landdrostei finally granted permission to "exercise the general retail". The county Westen office subsequently warned him not to exceed the concession regulations.

### **Expansion of the trading license**

As early as March 4, 1833, Moses Davidson Jr., with the support of provost Carl Mühlenkamp and the other principals, applies for the expansion of the business. The previous licence allowed Davidson to:

1. only carry goods of the type which are indispensable to the farmer in his household, e.g. Oil, 'Light' (tallow), lard, tar, tobacco, salt, etc.

2. obtain these goods domestically; however, required that he

3. abstain completely from all trading in coffee, tea, sugar and fine spices."<sup>15</sup>

In the joint application, it is pointed out that all merchants in the area, including the second one in Dörverden (meaning Schliemann) have always traded coffee and sugar, and obtain these goods from Bremen.

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12 KAV 6/137e

13 Cloth trade

14 Buy now pay later

15 KAV 6/137e

It is also pointed out here once more that the only merchant with a license to sell coffee and sugar keeps prices high in absence of competition. With competition they would drop significantly. And in relation to Schliemann it says: *“while the only merchant has become rich with coffee and sugar and must get even richer at the expense of all residents, who cannot buy their goods from the city, but only in very low quality from the store in the village.”* So Schliemann must obviously have become ostensibly wealthy with his trade in Dörverden.

Further down in the text we get an interesting insight into the living conditions of the time around 1833: *“Coffee has become indispensable for the subjects; in particular, coffee has not only become a need for the lowliest man, but also advantageous for subsistence<sup>16</sup>, in that many a humble man, along with his family of seven or more people, from a little coffee mixed with cichories,<sup>17</sup> with dry bread enjoys the cheapest drink and thereby refreshes himself. Sugar has become indispensable for women who have recently given birth or are ill. If the merchant were not allowed to trade these goods, the sneak trade would spread even more, as the rag-pickers, these smugglers, would find even more buyers of sugar and coffee than now, because the peasant is not in a position to buy his indispensable goods from the cities, his lack of money allowing him to buy only very low quality.”*

The application further argues that there was never any guild pressure in the county Westen and that, given the local conditions, the protected Jew Moses Davidson, as the second merchant, should be allowed to trade in coffee and sugar and to source these goods from Bremen. In addition, he should be allowed to trade yarn according to existing laws, so that *“there is more competition for those eager to buy, and better prices can be expected for us to raise the flax industry.”*

According to various interim correspondence, the Royal Landdrostei decided on September 8, 1834 without stated reason, that Davidson *“is not granted the extension of his trade concession to include the coffee and sugar trade”* and on November 24, 1834, the approval to trade in brandy is also not granted.<sup>18</sup>

### **Trade in yarn**

Davidson was summoned to the Westen office on February 22, 1833. He is accused of having traded yarn without a licence. He replies that it was only a barter, which, in his opinion, was not prohibited. The official Grimsehl refers to two regulations, according to which this type of yarn trade is subject to authorization, but Davidson does not have such an authorization, and he prohibits him from further trading in these things, under threat of punishment.

In addition, the competitor Schliemann complained to the county on December 28, 1833. He was a sworn yarn trader and therefore committed to quality, but had probably had little turnover in the past few years with *“our famous heavy yarn”*. He attributed this to the fact that *“the common man lives in the delusion that those who are not authorized to trade, pay the yarn better, even knowing that the sworn person is keen on correct and good yarn”*. Schliemann reports that Schumbarg-Müffelmänn's daughter wanted to exchange some pieces at Davidson for goods, each for 4½ grt (grote). The girl did not agree with this price and referred to Schliemann, who would pay 5 grt. Ms. Davidson accepted this price. Schliemann then sent the wife of the small cottager Christoph Lohmann to Davidson to see how much was paid there. *“The woman went immediately and brought coffee with the remark that the wife of Davidson had said that she actually only gave 4½ grt., but since she had come a long way, she would give her ¼ coffee at 5 grote.”* At the end of his communication, Schliemann writes that he, as a sworn yarn dealer, was obliged to ensure that no unauthorized person trade in yarn and that he therefore reports this case.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the yarn trade, the county Westen is committed to giving Davidson the licence he is seeking, although in Dörverden the merchant Schliemann and the “resident” Bolland are dealing in yarn. However, this should only be *“granted for the time being and until further disposal”*. This provisional

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16 Making ends meet

17 Coffee substitute made from roasted chicoree roots

18 KAV 6/137e

19 KAV 6/137e

permission is given by the Landdrostei on August 22, 1834. Accordingly, Davidson is to be sworn to follow the relevant ordinance on yarn trading meticulously, and neither accept nor sell "any other yarn but yarn bought according to this ordinance" which specifies "10 bind, 90 threads per skein, and a bobbin width of 3¾ cubits<sup>20</sup>". He must immediately report incorrectly and fraudulently coiled yarn to the authorities, as well as give the spinners as many instructions as possible to produce good quality. He should pay the acquired yarn in cash and in no way exchange it for goods."

Davidson subsequently asked to be exempted from the oath. This surely has to do with the Jewish faith. The Landdrostei, in a document of December 22, 1834, sees no way to exempt him from the oath because it is required by law. As a result, there is further correspondence about the content of the oath formula, especially about the state regulations to be named therein. On February 18, 1835, "Moses David Davidson, 41, accompanied by the teacher Marcus Loevenson, employed by the Israelite community of Dörverden," appears before the official Grimsehl in Westen. The protocol of the meeting records: "*that the Israelite to be committed, without further ado, bring a printed Hebrew Bible or a printed Pentateuch<sup>21</sup>, hold it in one hand, with the other point to the 7th verse in the 20th chapter of the 2nd book of the 5 books of Moses<sup>22</sup> and utter the following oath: "I swear before God Almighty, who created Heaven and Earth and myself, whose curse smites the perjurer, without deceit and without reservation that I, Moses David Davidson, son of Moses David and Goldchen Philippeon, shall faithfully fulfill in all points the ordinance of June 24, 1779 regarding the yarn trade and proper bobbins in the principality of Lüneburg and the counties of Hoya and Diepholz, and the ordinance of September 7th, 1787, regarding the correctness of the yarn bobbins and the thread count, as well as the quality of the purchase yarn in the county of Hoya and Diepholz, so help me God Adonai Elohim, Amen «.*"<sup>23</sup>

This means that nothing else stands in the way of the yarn trade.

### **Brandy trade and serving**

In a report dated January 27, 1834, the Westener civil servant Schaafs investigates the allegation that merchant Davidson is selling and serving spirits without permission. He notes that hitherto it was customary for merchants to sell spirits in bottles along with other goods, but they were not allowed to serve them in drinking glasses. That Davidson also sold bottled brandy as customary. That he probably also sold the alcohol in small vessels and people "*drank it in front of his shop, in the vestibule*". That he saw himself unable to prevent this, but said that he would no longer tolerate it in the future. In addition, Davidson assured that he had never poured brandy for money in drinking glasses – but had given a free schnapps to someone who had bought goods from him. The rapporteur Schaafs notes that Davidson's behavior has undeniably harmed the innkeepers.<sup>24</sup>

Apparently the innkeepers complained that Davidson was trading in brandy. This emerges from a note by the county Westen from February 11, 1834. That is why the innkeeper Friedr. Hittmeier, Moses Davidson and the two Dörverden community principals Rodewald and Friedrich Meyer appeared in the county office. The principals report that it had always been the norm in Dörverden that the merchants also trade in brandy, but were not allowed to serve it in individual glasses. They were also not allowed to have seated guests. That if spirits were only allowed to be sold by innkeepers, there would be a risk of "overpricing".<sup>25</sup> In a report to the Landdrostei (Royal Government) of August 14, 1834, official Grimsehl deals with legal questions and hitherto existing procedures regarding the brandy trade. He suggests that Davidson be banned from trading in spirits despite the permission to trade in general goods. The Landdrostei accepts this proposal on August 22nd. Davidson is notified on August 27, and warned that in case of transgression

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20 1 cubit = 58.4 cm = 23 inches

21 The 5 Books of Moses

22 Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy G-d, in vain, for the Lord will not hold blameless anyone who takes His name in vain.

23 KAV 6/137e

24 KAV 6/137h

25 KAV 6/137h

his trading licence would be revoked. Davidson files another application on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1834, which was rejected yet again by the Landdrostei on the 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>26</sup>

In a letter dated August 20, 1835, Davidson pleaded to be allowed to trade in spirits. Since the ban, his business has been reduced by half, but he still has to support a large family with nine children, a "weak" wife and a "very old" 80-year-old mother. He explains that apparently in Dörverden it has become a habit that many people no longer shop at his store in order to shop in a single place, with less inconvenience. He also explains that there is no brandy distiller in the Dörverden parish that he would be competing with, and that it is now customary for dairy farmers to buy  $\frac{1}{4}$  Anker<sup>27</sup> brandy, bundled. In addition, competition would lead to the availability of quality goods and lower prices. In addition, taverner Hittmeyer lived far away from him and he rarely had at most  $\frac{1}{4}$  anchor brandy in stock, the widow Wolters had only small quantities of brandy and the kötner (innkeeper) Heußmann had expanded his crops and had a lot of income from local or passing guests. The Kötner Dohrmann sometimes does sheet metal work, operates a general store and also has good income through his inn, but also only has to feed his wife and one child.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, the result of this application cannot be determined.

### **Lease, purchase and sale of the Kötnerstelle (farmstead) Dörverden No. 45 (today Große Str. 47)**

In the farmsteads file for Dörverden No. 45<sup>29</sup> there is a lease and loan agreement that was concluded on June 28, 1806. Contractual partners are the "Herrschaftl. Köthner (proprietary cottager) Dietrich Christian Müller" from Dörverden and the "Protected Jew Moses David". According to it, David lent money to Müller on October 25, 1798, which has been paid off but for the remaining claim of 135 Reichstaler, 5 Mariengroschen and 5 Pfennig. David adds 34 Reichstaler 30 Mariengroschen and 3 Pfennig to this sum, for Müller to have a "capital" of 170 Reichstaler in convention coins. It is also stated that they signed a rental agreement on October 25, 1806. The "leaser", ie Müller, leases "*the small house and the garden, including the Kohlhof (cole garden)*" outside the village for 18 Reichstaler. David also receives the "*rear attic for skin hanging*" in the house. "The garden at the Small House was enlarged to the gutter [...] and widened towards the Small House."

David must keep the enclosure in a "defensible" state. He also gets 24 steps additional length of the Kohlhof.

It is agreed that David will keep the rent of 18 Reichstaler per year and discount it from the loan. The remaining capital bears 5% interest.

So David or Davidson initially lived on the Dörverden 45 stead.

Quite inventive is a contract from the of the District Archive farmsteads file of July 19, 1832 between the dairy half-farmer Joh. Died. Bolland zu Stedorf and Moses Davidson. It states that Bolland sold the independent Kötnerstelle No. 45 to Davidson with the following accessories:

- The whole site plus a small house and garden,
- use of the so-called Kohlgarten adjacent to Rittmeister Hoppes garden,
- use of the 13-Himptsaat-size field in the Bocksfelde near Otto Hilmann,
- all lands which after consolidation arise from the marsh, after the deduction of 50 rods,
- the associated burial ground and church pews,
- and all the rightful and rights.

Purchase price: 950 Reichstaler in "weighty gold". In addition, the usual ancillary agreements are made on the legal transition, etc. Besides Bolland and Davidson, Messrs. Franke, C. Mühlenkamp and Heinrich Heußmann sign as witnesses.

May one ask the question whether this deal was perhaps struck in the tavern and whether it even complied with the legal norms of the day? Since it is probably of no legal importance, there is no further correspondence in the farmsteads file.

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26 KAV 6/137h

27 Anker = about 35 liters

28 KAV 6/137h

29 KAV 5/291 Nr. 45

On April 3, 1833, at the county Westen office there appeared Moses Davidson and Johann Dietrich Bolland from Stedorf, the latter as the owner of the *Vollkötnerstelle* (full-size farmstead) Dörverden No. 45 which arose from the bankruptcy of Friedrich Habenicht. Both request to register an agreement that they had concluded in hope of its approval by the Royal Landdrostei, namely that Bolland would sell Dörverden site No. 45, including all accessories and rights, to Davidson. However, it does not include a Bruchwiese (marshy meadow) near Hiddinghausen with a size of 28 Himptsaat<sup>30</sup> and the large Geestkamp (coarse field) in front of the shop with around 21 Himptsaat, 19 of which are uncultivated.

Davidson paid 1,200 Reichstaler in gold for the *Kötnerstelle* (farmstead) including the remaining parcels, of which 500 Reichstaler is the first mortgage bearing 5% interest. The remaining 700 Reichstaler are to be paid on St. Martin's day (November 11) 1833.

The Landdrostei is not averse to granting the permit, but still calls for a discussion between the two regarding the feudal dues for the site. The dispute is difficult due to the obligations on the property, which apparently make a partition seem unfeasible due to the detachment of the two tracts of land (Bruchwiese and Geestkamp). A discussion between Bolland and Davidson is recorded on November 21, 1833 in Westen. The discussion of a solution between the two contracting parties, the county Westen and the Royal Landdrostei dragged on. In the meantime, probably in 1836, Bolland discharges all feudal obligations of Hofstelle 45. Therefore, of course, there is no longer any need to settle this. And thus the Landdrostei finally granted approval on October 17, 1836.

Bolland and Davidson then finalize the official purchase contract at the county Westen on March 9, 1837. The separation of the two mentioned parcels and the purchase price of 1200 Reichstaler gold remain. The two separated parcels are inseparably linked to the "von Behrschen *Halbmeierstelle*" (half-size dairy farm) Stedorf No. 25, which is owned by Bolland. The purchase price has already been paid. Any other mortgages on the two separated parcels remain with Bolland. Section 6 states: "It is also noted that the seller also paid  $\frac{3}{4}$  part of the redemption sum in the amount of 190 Reichsthaler Courant and also bears half the cost of this contract, as he already does half of the Fiscal fees ad 32 Reichthaler paid 12 Gute Groschen."

Since the land consolidation<sup>31</sup> has not yet been completed, a regulation to this effect, which reads: "§ 7. The seller promises that he has paid the new dike construction and land consolidation costs, or if there still were any arrears, past or future, only the seller will pay these costs, so that the buyer shall be free of all land consolidation and division costs and free of the costs of dike construction, or, if the buyer were obliged to pay these, he should be compensated by the seller."

On the same day the contract was signed, the county Westen approved it. A stamp fee of 2 Reichstaler and 4 good groschen is payable for this.<sup>32</sup>

We can identify another property that belonged to Kötnerstelle No. 45. Because in the "*Rezeß (Legislative Record) on the consolidation and special division of the uncultivated Marsh and Geest fields, together with the Bruch and heath communities of Dörverden, Stedorf and Geestefeld*" (proceedings concluded in 1840), in "*Section 5 (main streets, communication and paddock tracks, passages, track improvement areas, clay pits, ditches)*" under heading "*II Other communicating and coupling routes*", letter "C. *On the Geest and in the marsh and heath communities*" No. "45. *The path from the former path to Habenichts, leading behind Davidson's paddock to track no. 39, and from there through the boxing field to the Dörverdener Wood, 2 rods wide including the trenches.*"

Davidson signed the mentioned record on June 23/24, 1840 among many others as a party. It is noted after his signature that he is a "*Köthner*" (cottager).<sup>33</sup>

On September 12, 1863, the merchant Moses Davidson (seller) had a purchase contract with the Bremerhavener merchant Johann Köster (buyer) registered by the Royal District Court in Verden. The seller at this point is the grandson of David, the *Höcker* (merchant) who had lived in Dörverden since 1783. The object of sale is the "*independent (free of feudal dues) Köthnerstelle*" Dörverden No. 45 including all buildings, estates, rights and privileges. However, Davidson keeps "*the lot by the railway station, hitherto*

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30 One Himptsaat =  $873 \frac{1}{3} \text{ m}^2$  = around 0.22 acres

31 Now this is known as called Flurbereinigung (regrouping and readjudication of small, often non-adjacent plots of land)

32 KAV 5/291 Nr. 45 (1837)

33 Pag. 581 of the Rezess (Gemeindearchiv Dörverden)

not pertaining to the Köthnerstelle, along with the residential and goods shed built on it". This property is nowadays called Stedorfer Bahnhofstrasse 1. The purchase price for farmstead 45 is 7,000 thaler gold. Of these, 3,000 thalers are due on May 15, 1864. Agreements are made to pay the remaining amount. The site still bears the charge of a retirement partition agreement of March 26, 1855 (see below for details), according to which the current seller has obligations towards his parents and siblings. However, the sale is free from these obligations.

On May 17, 1864, Davidson and Köster agreed to change the aforementioned sales contract in such a way that the "merchant Friedrich Heinrich Harms from Bremerhafen, who was also present, accompanied by his wife Auguste born Brandis" enters into this contract joining Köster<sup>34</sup>. In addition, Harms' wife Auguste, who is not yet of legal age, acts as a guarantor for parts of the purchase price still to be paid in future. The guarantee is only valid after reaching the age of majority. Until then, her father, forester Brandis (Brandes?), from Diensthop, will act as the guarantor.

The now responsible county Verden has no objections to the purchase contract.

As early as 1865 Harms sold the property to the merchant August Krusewitz. All three buyers, Köster, Harms and Krusewitz are from Bremerhaven.

### Further real estate transactions

The Köthnerstelle includes a "poor Geestland field", located behind the Bocksfeld in a size of 4 *Morgen* and 39 square rods<sup>35</sup>. On July 2, 1838, Davidson applied for approval by the Landdrostei for its sale to the "von Behrschen Halbmeyer (half-cottager) Joh. Heinrich Precht zu Stedorf". He justifies the intent to sell with the distance from his site, the poor soil and that to manage this land he has to neglect other, "quite considerably better lands". He intends to acquire several better-yielding plots of land.

On October 12, 1837 Davidson sold to the *Pfarrbrinksitzer* (parish outskirts small cottager) Heinrich Osterholz at Dörverden No. 67 (today Bahnhofstrasse 5) the Heath area which had been "adjudicated to him in the Dörverdener Division of the Common Lands<sup>36</sup> in the Dörverdener Bruch, located in the 1st flag between Döhrmann and Grauerholz No. 1604" of the map, 4 acres and 13 square rods in size. Purchase price 184 Reichstaler and 21 good groschen. The county confirmed the contract on December 24, 1837.<sup>37</sup>

After he took over the farmstead in 1855 on the basis of an *Altenteilsvertrag* (Retirement partition agreement), David's grandson who, like his forefathers, bears the name Moses Davidson, sold, on March 2, 1858, a parcel the size of 2 *Morgen* and 40 square rods in the *Lohmarsch* next to Fricke to the *Brinksitzer* (small cottager) Heinrich Dieckhoff at Dörverden No. 83 (today In der Worth 2/4). A farmstead apparently had to keep its economic strength in order to be able to pay the taxes on it. Davidson therefore points out that site 45 has a total of 9 acres and that even after the sale there is still enough "strength" to pay the state and church taxes. He also mentions that he had obtained "about 1 acre of land that has been excavated by the railroad, which he is already busy filling in and making arable, some of which already is."

Davidson had had to give up a piece of land to the railroad because the Hanover - Bremen line, which opened in 1847, runs through it. As compensation, he probably received the abovementioned acre. In order for the permit to be granted, Davidson points out that "his site is studded with precious buildings" and is therefore more valuable than the usual *Köthnerstellen* (cottages), and "that for him as a merchant the site acreage is not of so much use, and would certainly be better used by Dieckhoff".<sup>38</sup>

### Merchant and butcher

On October 30, 1840, Moses Davidson wrote to the Landdrostei in Hanover and asked for permission to hire a well-legitimated "*alien*"<sup>39</sup> for his slaughter business as "assistant"<sup>40</sup>. He reminds that he has been a

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34 KAV 5/291 Nr. 45

35 One Morgen = 0.62 acres (2.500 m<sup>2</sup>); 1 square rod (Quadratrute) = 26.1 sq yd (21,84 m<sup>2</sup>).

36 Land consolidation finalized within the Rezeß of 1840

37 KAV 5/291 Nr. 45

38 KAV 5/291 Nr. 45

39 not from the Kingdom of Hanover

40 KAV 6/137f



trader and butcher in Dörverden for a number of years. He had been slaughtering with domestic helpers for a while, but in the past few years he had the misfortune of employing such "*individuals*" that he soon had to release again because of "*their conduct*". He had not succeeded in finding a capable domestic assistant, from which his very large household suffered immensely. There was no *shochet* (kosher butcher)<sup>41</sup> here in the country, which he needed for his large Jewish household. It was a considerable expense for his household if he had to buy from afar "*all this meat for a significant family, where just the living children amount to 12*". After careful consideration, he was now convinced that he would not be able to subsist without a slaughter business. Because of his other business and his "*frailty*" he himself could no longer slaughter. His children, too, were still too young and not strong enough for the hard work. That is why he needs an assistant. However, he had met a "suitable person Simon Stark" who had worked eight years in Achim with a gentleman and three years with another, but was a "foreigner" with good "*legitimations and attestations*", which he attaches to his application. He therefore asks for permission to hire this Simon Stark as a slaughtering assistant, if only for two or three years. After that he could "*use one of his sons for the slaughtering*".

The permit is initially refused because Stark's homeland certificate has long expired. Davidson wrote in a reply to the Landdrostei on November 30, 1840 that the extension of the homeland certificate was "*only due to oblivion*". By the way, Stark comes from Roedelsee in the Kingdom of Bavaria. On December 11, 1840, the Landdrostei authorized the county Westen to grant permission for a period of 5 months and, if Stark provided a certificate, to issue it for two years. It is not clear from the files how this matter went on.

### **Member of the Knoyl interest group**

In 1841, the county Westen-Thedinghausen convened Dörverden's land owners with voting rights to a meeting. It was about a vote on whether the Dörverdeners lease the so-called Knoyl pastures on the other side of the Weser River in order to graze cows on them. *Köthner* Moses Davidson is listed among those present.

A "*revenue statement*" of the subsequently created society of those interested in Knoyl, "*on the taking in of the money from those interested in the Kneuel, as well as from the leased pastures and the sale of the grass from May 1, 1843 to 1844*", among the contributors lists No. 41 "Davidson, Moses" with a pasture share for which 1 Rthl. 22 ggr. are due<sup>42</sup>. So the Davidsons must have had at least one cow that was grazed and milked on the Knoyl. And they are transferred to the other side of the Weser by boat or the so-called "*Melkerschep*". Mainly women crossed over to "*gentsied*"<sup>43</sup> ("the other side") at least twice a day from spring to autumn. All of this indicates that the Davidson family was quite well integrated into Dörverden.

### **1845 - Dowry for two daughters**

On April 18, 1845, the "*Israelite merchant and independent Köthner Moses Davidson Dörverden No. 45*" appears at the county Westen. He states that he is providing a dowry to his two daughters; Julia, betrothed to the Israelite merchant M. Weinberg in Lemförde, and Henriette, who is promised to the Israelite merchant M. Meyer in Rotenburg. Namely to Julia a "*bride treasure on the bride morning 500 Reichsthaler*" and to Henriette also on "*bride morning a natural dowry 370 Reichsthaler*". In addition, the two or their descendants should inherit all of their rights to his estate, "*only the principal heir of the stead*" should be given a preference "*regarding the stead*".<sup>44</sup>

### **Participation in the costs of the Dörverden train station**

Between 1845 and 1847 the county Westen-Thedinghausen deliberated on the routing of the railway from Hanover to Bremen through the townships of Stedorf and Dörverden and on the formation of a syndicate as a permanent representative<sup>45</sup>. As per the "Actum" of January 14, 1847, the "*attendant*"<sup>46</sup> townspeople had to commit to a voluntary contribution for the establishment of a train station at Dörverden. The average

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41 Butchering according to Jewish tradition. The throat of the animal is cut without stupefaction in order for it to bleed out more thoroughly.

42 Gemeindecarchiv Dörverden (GAD) Sondersammlung Altakten, Heft Nr. 7 („Knäuel“ ab 1841)

43 Still current Low-German expression meaning "yonder" (the other side)

44 5/291 Nr. 45

voluntary contribution was 12 ggr. and a few thalers. Only the merchant Davidson and the grain dealer Christoph Segelke firmly committed to 50 Rthl., which shows that the Davidson family was very interested in the train station and obviously could afford this investment.<sup>47</sup>

### **Altenteilsvertrag (Retirement partition agreement) of 1855**

In the farmsteads file of the Verden District Archives at Dörverden No. 45 there is a very interesting agreement on property and business handover as well as partition for old-age provision and severance. It was concluded on March 26, 1855 between the "*independent Köthner and merchant David Moses Davidson and his wife Marianne née Weingarten*" as owners and surrendering party of the site Dörverden No. 45 and the "*eldest son, the principal heir Moses Davidson, thereat, 29 years old*" as acceptor of the stead and the business.

Transferred are the independent farmstead No. 45<sup>48</sup> and the "*general store run by the parents, all the accessory buildings, land, rights and privileges and the encumbrances on them, as well as all movable inventory, including the manufactured and colonial goods warehouse together with the totality of site- and other debts*". The donors reserve for themselves an "*Activ-Capital*" of 6,000 Taler Courant. Of these, 3,000 thalers remain in the farmstead, not to be withdrawn, and should only become payable after the death of the retiring parents or of the son who is taking over. The remaining 3,000 thalers are to be paid out to the parents at any time upon their request after 6 months' notice. The entire capital of 6,000 thalers, or the amount remaining after any payment, is subject to interest at 4%.

This is followed by obligations under which the elders may keep their clothes, beds, bedding, etc. They are also entitled to: a parlor with furniture as befitting them, two bedrooms, wardrobes and suitcases, as well as free eating and drinking, firing and lighting, clean laundry and "*proper waiting*" as well as medical treatment and medicine when sick. In addition, there are regulations on the entitlement in case of absence, moving out or death of one or both of the parents.

Section 7 of the agreement regulates the following:

*"With regard to the compensation for the remaining eleven children of the retiring parents, the following is noted and ascertained by the parents, and the acceptor agrees to faithfully comply with:*

*The remaining 11 children of the retiring parents are:*

- a, Julie Davidson, 32 years old,*
- b, Jette Davidson, 30 years old,*
- c, Salomon Davidson. 28 years old,*
- d, Sofie Davidson, 26 years old,*
- e, Adolph Davidson, 24 years old,*
- f, Rosette Davidson, 23 years old,*
- g, August Davidson, 21 years old,*
- h, Rudolf Davidson, 19 years old,*
- i, Elise Davidson, 17 years old,*
- k, Ernst Davidson, 16 years old,*
- l, Ida Davidson, 15 years old.*

*Julie, Jette, Salomon, Sofie and Rosette Davidson are already married and each of them shall receive five hundred thalers of gold from their parents as a dowry and endowment items valued at two hundred and fifty thalers of gold, with which they shall be fully satisfied and have no claims of any kind in the goods handed over to the principal heir by the parents, with the exception of any inheritance of the assets which the parents reserved as old-age provision.*

*August and Rudolf Davidson emigrated to America and have already received part of their severance pay for this purpose, but the principal heir should pay each of them the sum of four hundred thaler Courant baar (cash) as complete severance when they reach the age of 25 - but if they were to marry, then already on the wedding morning.*

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<sup>45</sup> GAD Special collection of ancient files „Actum Dörverden wegen des Amts Westen-Thedinghausen den 23ten December 1845, den 14. Januar 1846, den 14. Juli 1846“

<sup>46</sup> present

<sup>47</sup> GAD Special collection of ancient files booklet 7 („Knäuel“ ... und Eisenbahnbau 1845 ...)

<sup>48</sup> KAV 5/291 Nr. 45

*Adolph, Elise. Ernst and Ida Davidson shall each receive from the acceptor the sum of five hundred thaler gold, and for endowment items two hundred and fifty thaler gold, as a complete severance payment when they reach the age of majority or, if they marry earlier, on their wedding morning.*

*These six as yet unmarried children, as well as the principal heir, still have the prospect of inheritance of the assets that the parents reserved as old age provision.”*

Further paragraphs regulate details of a limited right of residence for the still unmarried children Adolf, August, Rudolf, Elise, Ernst and Ida as well as agreements regarding the payment of severance pay and other details.

The partition agreement was approved on the following day, March 27, 1855, by the county Westen.

As we know from the above section "Lease, purchase and sale of the Kötnerstelle Dörverden No. 45", Davidson sells this Kötnerstelle free of old-age provision obligations to the Bremerhavener businessman Johann Köster.

### **Further business activities and departure from Dörverden**

In the Westen-Thedinghausen Trade and Business Office's "voter index for the 8-Nov-1848 elections of deputies to the General Legislature (Hanover)", David Moses Davidson is listed as a merchant and lottery collector with an annual tax amount of 4 Reichsthaler 12.<sup>49</sup>

Probably it was the son Salomon Davidson, who moved his business to Verden in 1857, who took part in the "General German Industrial Exhibition" in Munich in 1854. The catalog states: "... there was a lot of drive in the leather manufacturing business". This can be gathered from the fact that a Salomon Davidson from small Dörverden was present at a large exhibition in Munich. He can be found under No. 2821 as follows: "*Davidson S., Lohgerber (tanner), Dörverden near Verden. - Tailored black horse leather, horse leather boot parts.*"<sup>50</sup>

As we have seen before, Moses Davidson takes over the farm site Dörverden No. 45 together with the businesses that his father ran, including the general store and butchery, according to the retirement partition agreement in 1855. In 1864 he opened a "*Money, Exchange and Commission Business*" in Hildesheim at Marktstrasse 69, which was later continued as a bank "in the Zingel" and was sold in 1886. This Moses moved to Braunschweig in 1888, where he died in 1907.<sup>51</sup>

From May 2, 1866 there exists an extensive package of documents and various invoices in connection with a purchase contract for a warehouse with apartment and attic which the "Banquier M. Davidson" from Hildesheim sold for 600 thalers to the town of Dörverden<sup>52</sup>. This building still stands at the corner of Bahnhofstrasse and Stedorfer Bahnhofstrasse. The location in the immediate vicinity of Dörverden train station was ideal for the dealer Davidson.

Also in Hildesheim, Adolph Davidson, born in Dörverden in 1830, founded the "Adolph Davidson Bankhaus" in Hohen Weg in 1858; in Scheelenstrasse after 1882. His son Martin was Aryanized in 1938<sup>53</sup>.

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49 Staatsarchiv Stade Rep. 74 Westen, Nr. 65

50 As per Wikipedia there were 6588 exhibitors; 158 from the Province of Hanover

51 Christina Prauss (and students): Verfolgt, ermordet - unvergessen. (Persecuted, murdered, unforgotten) Zur Erinnerung an Schülerinnen der Städtischen Höheren Töchter- und Staatlichen Goetheschule unter der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft. (Accessory booklet to the laying of „Stolpersteinen“ [stumbling stones] in Hildesheim.) Editor: Goethegymnasium Hildesheim and Hildesheimer Heimat- und Geschichtsverein e.V., 2<sup>nd</sup> extended edition 2012, pp. 15–17 & 21

52 GAD Sondersammlung Altakten, Heft 7: Kauf-Contrakt einschließlich Rechnungen für dessen Aufstellung vom 21en Mai 1866, unterschrieben vom M. Davidson und dem Dörverdener Bürgermeister H. Heußmann.

53 See Accessory booklet (as in footnote 51), page 21

Daughter Ida (1840-1914) married Jonas Schiff (1827-1903), with whom she emigrated to Charlotte / North Carolina USA and made her fortune there. Both operated a well-flourishing tannery, which was destroyed in the course of the Civil War (1861-1865)<sup>54</sup>.

Son Ernst founded a leather factory in Hildesheim, which later became a shoe store.<sup>55</sup> Bertha (1863-1866) is buried in Verden, as is Röschen, who died in 1859.

When and why the family moved away from Dörverden has not been established.

The latest existing registration documents from Dörverden date from the period from 1891 to 1907<sup>56</sup>. No members of the Davidson family, Schiff or Weingarten were registered *after* this time.

### **How did family members fare in the 3rd Reich in Germany?**

At the end of this account the question must be asked how members of the Davidson family fared in Germany in the 3rd Reich. The brochure "Persecuted, Murdered - Unforgotten"<sup>57</sup>, researched by Christina Prauss, reports on four "Davidsons" as former pupils of the Goethegymnasium (High School) in Hildesheim, namely:

- Anna Davidson née Davidson, born April 18, 1874 in Hildesheim, died August 12, 1942 in Theresienstadt,
- born Henny Traube née Davidson, born September 28, 1871 in Hildesheim, died September 22, 1943 in Theresienstadt,
- Erna Friedländer née Davidson, born March 20, 1891 in Hildesheim, died November 14, 1941 in Minsk,
- Jenny Davidson, born November 6, 1865 in Hildesheim, died March 16, 1943 in Braunschweig.

The reports about these four women contain further details about their lives and some statements about related family members. It is very likely that men in the family also died under the Nazi regime.

### **Closing remarks**

As the above records show, the Davidson family actively participated in many important developments in Dörverden in the first half of the 19th century, such as the land consolidation, the leasing of the Knoyl community meadow, the development of the Dörverden train station and the emigration around the 1850s. This shows that the Davidsons seem to have been well integrated in Dörverden.

In the meantime, the descendants of the former Dördendener Moses David a.k.a. Moses David Davidson are scattered over large parts of the globe. He is the founder of a widely ramified family that has continued to grow dynamically despite the later unspeakable attacks by the Nazi regime.

Incidentally, Pedro Fuld, from Buenos Aires, Argentina, a 7th generation descendant after Moses David, wrote to Helmut Lohmann in 2009 in an email: "The scientist Dr. Isidor Traube stems from our family, as well as the Nobel Prize winner Sir (Dr.) Hans Krebs, and Daniel Heinemann, an important entrepreneur who was closely acquainted with the future chancellor Konrad Adenauer in the 20s."

Could the earliest family member known to us, let's call him the founder of the family, Moses David, ever have imagined what personalities would arise from the family and what suffering the descendants had to endure under the German Nazi regime?

## **Fig. 1**

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54 Source: Pedro Fuld, private E-mail of 14. Jul 2009 to H. Lohmann

55 See Accessory booklet (as in footnote 51), page 21

56 GAD old report documents

57 As footnote 51

*David Moses Davidson*

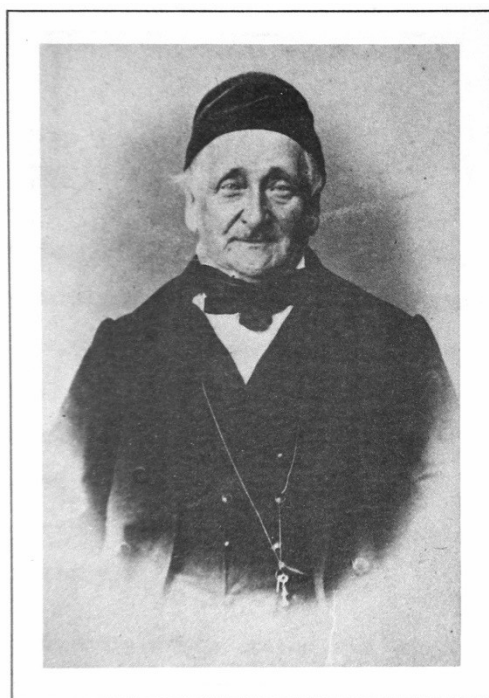
Signature in the "Rezeß (Legislative Record) on the consolidation and special partition of the Marsh and Geest fields, together with the Bruch and heath communities of Dörverden, Stedorf and Geestefeld" of June 23/24, 1840 on p. 581; Under his signature is noted: Köthner (cottager)

**Fig. 2**



Crop from a 1907 postcard with milkmaids returning from the Knoyl. Did Davidson family members or maids go milking with a bucket on top of their heads? (Postcard collection of Christian Heußmann)

**Fig. 3**



David Moses Davidson  
1794-1869



Marianne Weingarten  
1800-1884

The Davidsons late in life. (Photo contributed by Pedro Gervai [Canada], Great-great-grandson of the Davidsons)