

# The synagogue on Nobelstrasse

## New findings



The photo shows the outer façade of the Jewish synagogue on Nobelstraße as it was captured by an unknown photographer on 6 January 1936.

Until now, the exact appearance of the Bocholt synagogue was largely unknown, and it was only through the donation of this photograph by Irene

Stern-Frielich to the city of Bocholt that this gap in historical research could be closed.

The donor last visited the city of Bocholt in November 2024 and is the daughter of Walter Stern, who was born and went to school in Bocholt in 1926. After the pogrom of 9 November 1938, the Jewish Stern family fled to the Netherlands and Walter Stern survived in hiding and emigrated to the USA after the end of the war.

At the time the photo was taken, the entrance to the synagogue was framed by two octagonal towers. A magnificent arched window can be seen above the entrance with the double door.

## Early synagogue building

As early as 1798, the Jewish community in Bocholt built a Jewish school and a first synagogue on what is now Nobelstraße. The community, which had grown to thirteen families and had previously held its services in a private house, fell into considerable debt because of the building project.

The schoolhouse, which was once located directly in front of the synagogue, was demolished in 1898 and since then the synagogue was visible from the street. After an extension and extensive renovation, the Bocholter-Borkener Volksblatt reported on the ceremonial reopening of the synagogue on 18 September 1925. With a built-up area of around 190 square metres, it was a stately building. It measured 10.60 metres and 8.56 metres on the gable ends and 18.62 metres on the long sides. The given property boundaries determine this asymmetry.

## Destruction and memory

In addition to a bima and a memorial stone, basalt slabs set into the pavement in front of the Haus des Handwerks today commemorate the layout of the synagogue. An oblique aerial photograph preserved in the NRW State Archives clearly shows the two turrets on the southern long side of the synagogue and very probably also the black Decalogue tablet with the Hebrew version of the Ten Commandments.

On the night of the November pogrom in 1938, National Socialists smashed up the interior of the synagogue and demolished the windows. The members of the SA, most of whom came from Bocholt, took the Decalogue tablets attached to the synagogue to the nearby SA home at Nobelstraße 19. Two fragments of these tablets were rediscovered during archaeological excavations on Europaplatz in 1982 and are now part of the Bocholt City Museum collection. The burning of the synagogue was prevented by the intervention of neighbour Karl Hülskamp, who feared that the fire would spread to his neighbouring joinery.

In December 1938, less than a month after the pogrom night, the damaged building was sold to Mr Hülskamp with the municipal requirement that its former use as a synagogue be made unrecognisable. The building was finally destroyed by an Allied bombing raid on 31 May 1942.

The city of Bocholt is very interested in further historical photographs of Nobelstraße and in particular of the synagogue building for further research work. Please contact the city archives.

The photo of the month is presented once a month by the Bocholt City Archive.

Photos and text information come from the holdings of the city archives. The contributions to the picture are written by the following employees of the city archives.

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The picture series was launched at the Bocholt Culture Day 2006 and showed the first photo with the "Meckermannin Langenbergpark" in October 2006.

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