

The frank family



The Frank family can be traced back to the Judengasse (or Jews' lane) in Frankfurt. This was considered the ghetto of the city. Most Jews who lived in the center of the city had to move there eventually. Living conditions in the Judengasse were cramped and povertous, and governmental (guild) laws prohibited most Jews from practising skilled crafts and trades; making it harder to stay afloat. Through my research, I discovered that the Stern and Cahn families, who are direct descendants of Anne Frank, lived in the Judengasse many years before she did. Anne's great-great grandfather was a wealthy merchant, and most of her other descendants were historically academics and booksellers.

In 1889, Anne's father (Otto) was born, and in 1925, Otto married Anne's mother, Edith. The Franks placed great emphasis on a good education. The children attended music lessons (Otto played the cello), and they learned English, French and Italian as a matter of course. After the sudden death of his father, Otto worked in the family-owned bank with his younger brother Herbert. When the first World War broke out in 1914, the Franks were assimilated and considered themselves to be German, and the sons reported for service voluntarily: Otto became an officer in France. After the first World War, the banking industry was in steady decline and the Frank family lost a lot of money because of it. In 1926, the Franks had their first daughter Margot, and in 1929, Anne was born.

Before the second World War, the financial situation worsened after Germany was forced to pay reparations after losing the first. Also, the social situation for Jews worsened due to heightened feelings of anti-Semitism among the populous. In January of 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of

the Reich, and one of his first actions was to boycott the Jewish population in Germany. Government commandos occupied the entrances to Jewish department stores and shops, and prevented access to law firms and medical practices owned by Jewish citizens. The Franks then decided to leave Germany for Amsterdam to seek asylum and start a new.

When the German army attacked the Netherlands in 1940 and then occupied the country, anti-Jewish laws were issued. Jews were increasingly limited in their professional and social life. In 1942, after Margot received a letter to be transported to a German labor camp, Otto decided it was time to go into hiding. This hiding place was prepared by Otto a year earlier in the annex of a business in Amsterdam. The Frank family went into hiding on July 6, 1942. They lived in what came to be known as the secret annex for two years, together with the van Pels family. This is where Anne Frank wrote her diary that later became world famous.

The Franks and their friends were betrayed to the Gestapo in 1944 and then transported to Westerbork. With the very last transport from the Netherlands, which left Westerbork on September 3, 1944, Anne Frank, now fifteen years old, her parents and sister Margot were moved to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Anne and Margot died there in March 1945, from the typhus epidemic. Their mother, Edith Frank, who had remained in Auschwitz, died as well, probably from exhaustion; their father, Otto Frank, was one of the few Jewish prisoners liberated by Soviet troops in 1945.