

SYNAGOGUE OF HAINSFARTH IN BAVARIA

scarcely known details compiled by Rolf Hofmann in 2014

English translation with help of Yehuda Shenef

Since the synagogue of Hainsfarth (built in 1860) is still regarded by art historians as "neo-moorisch" in style, a critical questioning of this position makes sense, as a closer look at this building reveals a number of unexpected details. Especially the focus on the planners and artists who were in charge for the construction plan and its realization gives important background information. For it shows in the aftermath the involvement with the art work of Friedrich von Gärtner, favourite architect of Bavarian King Ludwig I (who was forced to resign in 1848 due to his scandalous relationship with Lola Montez). The synagogue of Hainsfarth is high ranking in the history of rural Jewish communities of the 19th century in the Swabian part of Bavarian, however for different reasons as so far assumed by historians.

The plan of the synagogue in Hainsfarth can be attributed to architect Eduard Bürklein, who already had designed the identically constructed synagogue in the Franconian town of Heidenheim, as published in the "Allgemeine Bauzeitung" in 1854. Eduard Bürklein's brother was the better known architect Friedrich Bürklein, who had designed the impressive train station buildings in Munich and Augsburg. The train station in Augsburg is basically preserved until today. Both Bürklein brothers were students of Friedrich von Gärtner.

The decisive formal impetus of the synagogue of Hainsfarth can be attributed to Friedrich von Gärtner. Impressive at first sight are the spectacular horseshoe-shaped soffits, which indeed are a "Moorish" style element. A closer look however reveals that these soffits are just pre-faded formal design with round shaped window frames behind it, a very typical design element of Gärtner, which still can be seen at the Augsburg train station building. Another impressing style element in Hainsfarth are the wall and ceiling decorations inside the synagogue where a prototype can be found in another of Gärtner's designs. Gärtner's first construction contract of King Ludwig I in Munich (around 1830) was Ludwigskirche (St. Louis Church) where luxurious stencil paintings in the interior were made by decoration painter Joseph Schwarzmann, to whom the King also transferred the further elaboration of paintings in other buildings.

One can assume that Eduard Bürklein for the plan of the Heidenheim synagogue used the design vocabulary of his teacher Friedrich von Gärtner, probably on the basis of the Protestant prayer house built 1848 in Bad Kissingen, a design that shows striking similarities to the synagogues in Heidenheim and Hainsfarth. The planning of the Bad Kissingen prayer house was carried out in the studio of Friedrich von Gärtner. Since Eduard Bürklein at this time worked for the Royal building authority in Ansbach (Franconia), one may assume that he was familiar with the the prayer house and that he derived from it the draft of the synagogue of Heidenheim, which afterwards in turn acted as a model for the synagogue of Hainsfarth.

At both synagogues horseshoe-shaped soffits pretended a complete "Moorish" style of these buildings, and above the portals Hebrew inscriptions were engraved to stress the fact that these were no Christian churches, but religious buildings of Jewish communities. Oriental style elements obviously then were accepted by Jews as reminiscent of their historical roots.