

THE ECKERNFÖRDERSTRASSE CAMP

The Eckernförderstraße Camp in the former Israelite Hospital

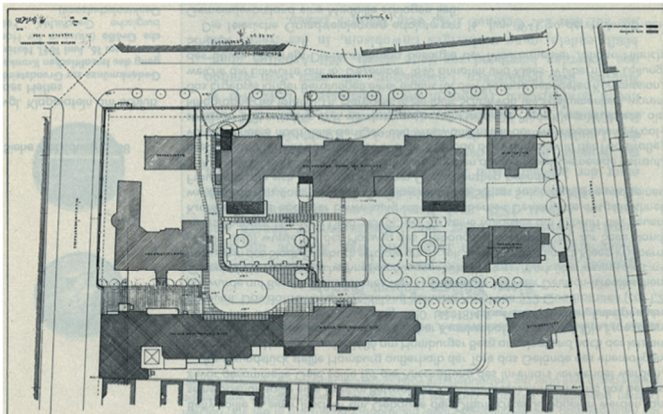
The new Israelite Hospital at *Eckernförderstraße* (today Simon-von-Utrecht-Strasse) was inaugurated in 1843 by the Jewish community in Hamburg with the generous support of banker Salomon Heine. Until 1933, it provided medical care to Jews and non-Jews. On the northern edge of the site, a new building for surgery as well as a ward building were constructed in 1930.



The Israelite Hospital around 1915 – the synagogue room can be seen above the main entrance (Staatsarchiv Hamburg)

Reserve hospital and Northwest German Jaw Surgery

Between 1933 and 1939, the hospital was restricted, harassed and disenfranchised by Nazi terror, and finally expropriated on October 1, 1939. At the beginning of the war, one month earlier, the *Reserve Military Hospital 8* was established in the old building and remained there until 1943. At the same time, the *Northwest German Jaw Surgery* moved into the new building and remained there until the end of the war.



Site plan of the entire site with the old building on Eckernförderstraße and the new building of the surgery on the northeast side, 1930 (Bauakte Bezirksamt Hamburg-Mitte/Building file Hamburg-Mitte district office)

Deployment of Italian military internees on the Heiligengeistfeld, 1944 (Staatsarchiv Hamburg)



A camp for military internees

With the relocation of the military hospital in late autumn 1943, a camp for Italian military internees with 150 places was set up in the old building. The internees were transferred to civilian status in September 1944. In the course of this, an additional infirmary for Italians called "Italian Hospital" or "Italian Infirmary" was created with 135 hospital beds. Eighteen Italian nurses and doctors worked here.

About 70 Italians are known by name to either have been interned or worked in the former Israelite Hospital. Most of them worked in construction and industrial companies, many in the immediate vicinity and in Altona. *St. Pauli Eisenwerke W. Schenck & Co.*, which was only a few meters away, employed 20 Italians in addition to numerous French and Dutch forced labourers. The *Franz Wehowsky* construction business in Altona also benefited from the use of Italian workers and forced labourers from other countries.

The camp and infirmary were dissolved after the liberation in July 1945. The Italians were repatriated.

At least five Italians died in the "Italian infirmary".

Italian Military Internees (IMI)

The Italian Military Internees represent a special group of forced labourers. With the surrender of Italy on September 8, 1943, large sections of the military were imprisoned and immediately deported to the German Reich. Soldiers and officers were subjected to forced labour. The treatment of the soldiers in captivity was very poor – similar to that of forced labourers from the Soviet Union or Poland. Starting in September 1944, the status of the men was changed to so-called civil labourer, but their living conditions improved only slightly. Of the more than 600,000 soldiers, about 50,000 died as a result of the imprisonment and working conditions. Hamburg housed about 12,000 IMI, of whom at least 320 died. The Italian War Gravesite [Cimitero militare italiano d'onore di Amburgo] at Öjendorf Cemetery commemorates Italians who died in northwestern Germany during the war. The Italian forced labourers have never been compensated by Germany.



Around 1965, the old building of the former hospital still clearly showed the traces of the destruction by the Nazi regime in 1939, to which, among other things, the prayer room on the upper floor fell victim. It was not until the 1980s that the building was renovated in line with its status as a historic monument.

(www.hamburg-bildarchiv.de)

