

News from Stendal, Germany

A film about the 600th year celebration of the Winckelmann High School in Stendal has appeared in the USA after almost 70 years.

Duane Thompson from the USA [Centennial, Colorado] found photographs on the Internet which matched a film which his father brought back from Europe after World War II. By letters and e-mail he reached out for help with information and in the identification of the old film. In the process he made contact and met a member of "The Circle of Friends" of the Winckelmann High School.

Stendal / Tangermünde. "Although I have seen it and played with it since I was a child, until now I have never made the effort to determine what it is or its importance," says Thompson. His father was a medic with Combat Command "A" of the U.S. 5th Armored Division which was in the Stendal and Tangermünde area of Germany between the 12th and 15th of April, 1945.

The film is of some sort of parade, possibly in 1938 and seems to be more professionally done than a simple home movie, says Thompson. The film is approximately 190 feet (7min 15 sec) in length, black and white, and silent. It is the original double-sprocket 16mm film stock that was apparently exposed in a super-16 configured camera. He described the full particulars of the film in his e-mail to the members of the circle of friends of the Winckelmann High School in hopes of learning about the event that was important enough for someone to document it on film. He had the film cleaned, repaired, and transferred to a DVD for viewing [by Western Cinema, a Denver area film preservation and restoration laboratory]. He then converted it to low-resolution video files which, along with some still frames captured in JPG format, could be placed on the Internet.

In the meantime, all of this information was placed on the page of the Circle of Friends of the Winckelmann High School. Spokesman Burkhard Jochemzyk, Chairman of the Circle of Friends informed us that Thompson had consulted the Circle of Friends after he noticed buildings and streets seen in his film matched other photographs presented on the Internet. For the "Winckelmänner" this electronic mail from the USA is a sensation.

We have downloaded and established that the enclosed pictures and the film is unique and, till now, an unknown film documenting the 600th annual celebration of the Stendal High School. On this occasion the High School was also named in honor of J. J. Winckelmann. Even if the film document is almost 70 years old, essential details are well recognizable. Jochemzyk describes the historical school building at the monastic churchyard, the religious grove street, the market, the sparrow mountain, and Schadewachten seen in the film.

Circle of Friends treasurer, Hans Basner, which had first read the message from overseas, answered it on the same day, and promised Thompson help. Shortly

thereafter Duane's brother, Joe Thompson [Colorado Springs], e-mailed and asked additional questions wondering how and where, in April of 1945, their father obtained a Zeiss Ikon (Kinox-B) 16mm film projector and the film of the 1938 parade in Stendal.

The Circle of Friends of the Winckelmann High School, is just as interested as the Thompson's, in clearing up these burning questions and is asking the public for help. Jochemzyk: "Can somebody, perhaps, still remember the events nearly 60 years ago? Of course it would naturally be an even bigger sensation if we could find the owner of the mentioned camera equipment [projector] or the maker of the film. Perhaps there still are citizens who remember the invasion of the 5th armored division and [their father]? We are grateful for anyone who is able who knows the answer to these questions comprehensively and truthfully." Circle of friends is looking for help of contemporary witnesses.

For the Circle of Friends and the High School the e-mails and the film are of current importance. Our traditional building at the monastic churchyard was our school house from 1898 to 1975, became the school building of the Winckelmann High School in Stendal. Finally, after years of outside use, it now stands empty after a comprehensive restoration to be used again with the beginning of the school year 2005/2006.

Contemporary witnesses are asked, to personally contact the office of the Circle of Friends of the Winckelmann High School at V. Schönbeckstraße 6, 39576 Stendal or telephone (0 39 31) 21 14 30.

by Edda Gehrmann.