



Exhibition Backgrounder

The story of Anne Frank, who chronicled her time in hiding in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam, began before the Holocaust and the Second World War.

Anne Frank – A History for Today tells two simultaneous stories. The exhibition timeline features reproductions of photographs and documents, illustrating the rise of Nazism in the 1920s and 1930s, the increasing persecution of Jewish Germans, the start of the Second World War, and the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands that began in 1940. The timeline is coupled with personal photographs and diary excerpts, introducing Anne’s family and their lives in Germany before they fled the escalating persecution of the Jewish people.

The heart of the exhibition is an exploration of the Franks’ lives in Amsterdam, the growing oppression and fear following Germany’s occupation of the Netherlands, and the family’s decision to go into hiding in a secret annex to Otto Frank’s office building. The boredom and anxiety of their time in hiding came to an end in the worst way, when they were arrested by the Nazis, possibly betrayed by an unknown informant. Only Anne’s father Otto survived the war.

The exhibition also examines the war itself, including the systematic murder of Europe’s Jewish population in the Holocaust, the Allied victory, and the war’s aftermath. A final section shares Canadian stories related to the Second World War, including the liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian forces between September 1944 and May 1945.

Notable features of the exhibition include a striking photograph of Anne’s father and uncle in their German officers’ uniforms during the First World War, a reference card of “racial distinction” according to German law, and a call-up notice like the one which summoned Anne’s sister Margot to a labour camp in 1942 — the impetus for the family’s decision to go into hiding.