

'SETTELA'

Anna Maria Steinbach 1934 - 1944



It is a well known image, the girl looking out of a train just before it leaves the Durchgangslager Westerbork for its destination of Auschwitz.

The image lasts seven seconds in the movie about Camp Westerbork, made by order of camp Kommandant Albert Konrad Gemmeker. For decades the picture was considered an iconic representation of the persecution of the Jews.

Aad Wagenaar, journalist at the Dutch local newspaper Haagsche Courant, searched for the girl's identity and discovered she was not Jewish, but one of

the 245 Gypsies who were deported from Westerbork to Auschwitz on 19 May 1944. These people became victims of a roundup on 16 May, following an order two days earlier from the SS Headquarters to the five regional police chiefs in the Netherlands to arrest all Gypsies and transport them to Auschwitz concentration camp.

Eventually Wagenaar found out with almost 100% certainty that this girl was Anna Maria Steinbach, born at a Gypsy camp in Buchten near the town of Sittard in the southern province of Limburg, on 23 December 1934.

She was the seventh child of Heinrich (Gypsy name: Moeselman) and Emilia (Gypsy name: Toetela) Steinbach, Moeselman and Toetela were Sinti. They had ten children. Only the father survived the war, but he died in 1946, it was said from grief about the death of his wife and children.

Anna Maria, Gypsy name "Settela", arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau on 22 May 1944. She was housed in the Gypsy part of the camp. This section was liquidated about five weeks later, on 31 July and 1 August. At that time Settela Steinbach, together with her mother and most of her brothers and sisters, were murdered.