

The World of Anne Frank: A Complete Resource Guide

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Chapter 3:

The Franks Go into Hiding

Mr. Frank Prepares the Hiding Place

ONCE THE Nazis occupied Holland, few Jews were able to emigrate to other lands. Dutch borders were heavily guarded: Even if Jews could safely make it to the border, their **passports**, stamped with a large *J*, clearly identified them. Dutch Jews were trapped.

Realizing this and feeling the increasing pressure of Nazi persecution, Mr. Frank wasted no time deciding how to protect his family. Soon after the Nazi invasion, he began to prepare a hiding place. For two years, he set it up. Five very good friends, all Dutch Christians, helped him. Once this hiding place was ready, he planned that he and his wife and daughters would simply “disappear.”

Slowly but steadily, Mr. Frank and his helpers carried in small amounts of supplies. Stores of canned foods, dried vegetables, and other necessities grew. Eventually, filled boxes rose to the ceilings in the rooms of the hideaway.

The Franks planned to just walk away from their home and leave everything behind. So they gave clothing and furniture to good Dutch neighbors for safekeeping. If the Franks managed to escape Nazi capture, these neighbors would return their possessions after the war. Otherwise, the Nazis would seize all their holdings, because they were Jews.

The **Aryanization of all Jewish property** was official Nazi policy. The practice of seizing Jewish wealth and possessions had begun in Nazi Germany. Now it spread to every occupied country. Jewish

homes, businesses, bank accounts, cars, jewelry, artwork, and every other thing of value became the property of the German state. Nazi thievery was done on a small scale, too. After rounding up Jews for deportation, many Hitlerites simply walked into Jewish homes and pocketed whatever they pleased. They often roughed up their captives in order to unearth more valuables.

Holocaust survivor Freida S. recalls, “At midnight the **Gestapo** pounded on our door. They had arrived to arrest my husband. Their first question? ‘Where are your money and jewelry?’ Then they proceeded to search our apartment. In their haste, they smashed the windows in my china closet, upset furniture, tore apart the beds, and slashed with their bayonets our wall paintings, which they left behind. It was all senseless destruction.”

Fortunately, the transferral of Mr. Frank’s business to his Dutch friends had gone smoothly. And the hiding place was nearing readiness. Mr. Frank set the date of their disappearance for July 16, 1942. Time was of the essence, for deportation of Holland’s Jews was going full speed ahead.

However, Margot’s call-up notice was still a shock to the whole family. They moved up the date to hide by eight days. They dared wait no longer.

Though Mr. Frank had informed Anne and Margot they would hide from the Nazis, he did not reveal how, when, or where they would do it. In fact, they did not learn these answers from their father until they were well on the way to their hiding place.



The Franks Walk to Their Hiding Place

With no time to waste, their last evening home was frantic. Mr. Goudsmit, a man who rented their upstairs room, decided to linger and chat with the Frank family until very late into the night. Not wanting to make this man suspicious, the Franks politely talked. Finally he went to bed. Two good Dutch friends, Miep and Henk Van Santen, then came and helped to carry last-minute needed supplies to the Secret Annexe.

Before dawn the next morning, Thursday, July 9, 1942, Mrs. Frank awakened her two daughters. The girls and their parents quickly piled on heaps of clothing. They did this because no Jew could safely walk the streets with a suitcase. Anne describes their dressing “as if we were going to the North Pole.” She had on two vests, three pairs of pants, a skirt, a jacket, a summer coat, two pairs of stockings, shoes, a woolly cap, a scarf, and still more! It was a hot, steamy, rainy summer day.

Soon Miep arrived and took Margot quickly away with her. They rode off on bicycles.

Shortly afterward, Otto, Edith, and Anne Frank walked slowly through the pouring rain toward the Secret Annexe. Margot and Miep had arrived safely before them. Four days later, Mr. Frank’s business partner, Mr. Van Daan, his wife, and son Peter joined them. Peter brought along his cat Mouschi. Four months later on November 17, 1942, Albert Dussel, a Jewish dentist, came to hide in the Secret Annexe. Only Mr. Van Daan had met Mr. Dussel before. In fact, the two frightened families had never really been close friends. They now hid together because they were Jews and because they wanted to live.

They Try to Cover Their Tracks

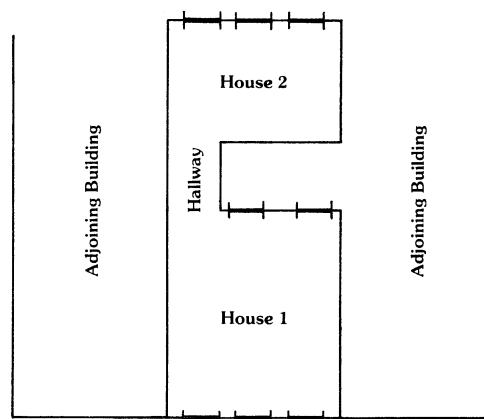
The Franks provided clues to confuse Nazi searchers, their neighbors, and their renter Mr. Goudsmit. They deliberately left their home in a state of disarray. Breakfast dishes remained on the

table, all the beds were unmade, and clothing and shoes lay scattered about. A notepad with an address in Switzerland lay on Mr. Frank’s desk.

Their plan worked. Later the Franks found out that their neighbors and friends believed they had escaped to Switzerland. Even Mr. Goudsmit was fooled. He later told Lies Goosens, Anne’s best girlfriend, that he believed Anne and her parents had made it safely across the Swiss border. Somehow, he said, Mr. Frank must have persuaded a Nazi SS (elite guard) to help them.

The Building Housing the Secret Annexe Is Unusual

The **Secret Annexe**, the Frank’s hiding place, once had been a laboratory and storage room at the back of the building where Mr. Frank had run his business for the past nine years. This four-story building* dated back to 1635. It was located along the Prinsengracht Canal, one of Amsterdam’s many canals. The building had a strange layout. For centuries, the Dutch had used their canals for trade. For this reason, property along the canals had been very desirable and expensive.



* The four stories were the ground floor, first floor, second floor, and third floor. In European countries, the street-level floor is called the ground floor. The next level is called the first floor, the next the second, and so on. We usually call the street-level floor the first floor, and count up from there.



To cut building costs, Dutch builders made structures facing the canals very, very narrow. The length didn't matter, so to provide necessary space, the houses were usually very long and several stories high. They were also side by side, with no space between buildings. The problem with this type of house plan was that windows could be placed only in the narrow front and back. As a result, all the rooms in the long center of the house were dark.

To solve this problem, some Dutch builders constructed two houses in this narrow space with both houses joined by a hallway. (The Dutch word for the rear house was *achterhuis*, or "afterhouse.") An open courtyard lay between the two houses. In this manner, windows could be placed in the middle rooms for needed light. The structure that housed the Secret Annexe was built like this.

There were problems with living in houses like these. They had a very confusing pattern. Because they were so long and narrow and high, the buildings had many hallways, many doorways, and very steep, almost vertical stairways. But for hiding, a house like this was perfect. And few people knew about the construction of Mr. Frank's building. Even better, the Germans had never seen such a plan in their country.

The House Plan of the Secret Annexe Building

The Secret Annexe was located on the second and third floors of the rear house. The ground floor, not pictured, was used by traders for loading and unloading cargo. (See photo 4.) You might ask why someone could not see the rear house from the storehouse windows on the upper floor of the front house. Remember that Mr. Frank was a spice dealer. To preserve freshness, spices had to be stored in darkness. For this reason, dark patterned paper was stuck on those storeroom windows. No one could see out. Besides, people standing there by those windows thought they were at the back wall of the building.

Then, for added safety, Mr. Frank had made another provision: he disguised the entrance to the Secret Annexe. A carpenter and good friend, Mr. Vossen, worked in Mr. Frank's warehouse. He built a swinging bookcase over the doorway. A hook on the back kept it in place so that no one could enter unless it was unfastened from the inside. (See photos 5 and 6.)

During daylight hours, the people who helped the hidden group worked in the offices on the first floor of this building. However, other workers here knew nothing about Jews hiding upstairs. Therefore, it was extremely important that the **fugitives** above make no noise during working hours.

Two bedrooms and the bathroom were directly above the offices. Because of this, the Secret Annexe people had to be very quiet. They could use the bathroom only in the early morning hours before the workers arrived or late in the evening after the workers left.

Often the Franks and Dussel spent the quiet hours of the day in the Van Daans' upstairs sleeping room. This was higher up and farther away from the ears of unsuspecting workers below. The Van Daans' bedroom, formerly a laboratory, was larger than any of the other closet-sized rooms of the Annexe. Therefore, it also served as the living room, dining room, and kitchen for the whole group. It contained not only folding beds but also two stoves and a sink. The group used one gas stove for cooking and the other one for burning garbage and giving heat in winter. Peter Van Daan's room, also upstairs, had a steep stairway leading to the attic. Here in the attic was the only window that could be opened without fear of discovery. Food and other supplies were stored in this area.

Anne's Diary Covers 25 Months in Hiding

The Franks, the Van Daans, and Dussel were to remain in the Secret Annexe from July 9, 1942, to August 4, 1944, a period of 25 months or 757 days.



They were worse off than ordinary convicts who at least have the daily privilege of breathing fresh air in a prison yard. These hidden people never dared set foot in the streets. The walls and sealed windows of this building held them in solitary confinement for the entire time. Because they were eight people crowded into too small a space for too long a time, they got on each other's nerves. It was not an easy time.

However, hiding now was the only way for a Jew to live in Holland or any other occupied country. For a Jew, no alternative existed. Now, stripped of a future, the poor people in hiding were left with only one certainty: the horror of being hunted down. They lived in constant fear of being discovered.

The suffering of all Jewish families at this time was **incomprehensible**. Reports from the outside world of death camps and slave-labor factories in the East would reach the Annexe people by way of radio and their helpers. These stories, plus the dangers around them, would numb their minds with fear. How could they keep their spirits from the breaking point?

Young Anne Frank found her own way to conquer Nazi terror. The Nazis could bully Jews by forcing them into hiding like hunted animals, but Anne refused to take on Nazi definitions of who she was and what she could do. Hitler's guards had no power to imprison her mind. Anne freed her human spirit by openly expressing herself on paper. She kept a diary of their 25 months in hiding, and used it as a control mechanism for responding to everything and everybody around her.

Her writing projects the high drama of the hiding place. Some occasional moments are light-hearted. Others are downright frightening. The reader of her diary smiles when, angered over Mr. Dussel's fussiness, she plants a stiff brush in his bed to get even. At other times, one can sense the terror of the Annexe people. Fear makes them run to the bathroom and causes their hands and knees to tremble.

Anne's diary ends on August 1, 1944, three days before the Gestapo raided their secret apartment and took the group away.

Their Helpers Are Their Lifeline

If Jews wished to hide to escape Nazi capture, their first requirement was a helper in the outside world. How else could they hope to secure food and other supplies necessary for survival? What about keeping their hiding place a secret? The Nazi defiers were not ordinary people. They had to have extraordinary courage, for the penalty for being caught was their own lives. Fortunately, the Franks had the privilege of having good and brave Christian friends who were willing to risk their own safety to act as protectors.

All five of the Dutch men and women who hid and protected their Jewish friends in the Secret Annexe had worked for Mr. Frank before the Nazi occupation. Once the Germans arrived, all five had joined the Dutch Resistance to free Holland from Nazi control. Helping the Franks and the others was just one way they resisted the Nazis.

Included among the group were Elli Vossen and Miep Van Santen, two typists for Mr. Frank's firm. (*See photo 7.*) Henk Van Santen, Miep's husband, also helped. All were in their twenties. Two others, Mr. Kraler and Mr. Koophuis, were Mr. Frank's business associates.

These kind and good people aided the group in hiding in many ways. Every day, they made deliveries of food, books, or medicines. And they provided companionship by visiting, sharing meals, and offering news of Nazi and underground activities. Their visits and deliveries, always highly welcomed, had to be made at times when the workers were not in the building. This was usually before 8:30 A.M., during lunchtime, and after 5:30 P.M. when business shut down for the day. Moreover, Miep and her husband once stayed overnight in the Annexe, just as a special visit of friendship. Sleeping in Anne's bed in the silence of the night, broken by sounds inside



and outside the building, they learned how truly frightful it was to be a Jew in hiding. Miep hardly slept a wink.

Providing the eight Annexe people with food was no simple matter. There were food shortages, and the Nazi government required ration coupons for food purchases. But the helpers took the risks of getting food illegally through the **black market**. Naturally, their Jewish friends paid a higher price than the going rate, for such illegal goods were always very expensive.

Two other men also came to the rescue of not only the Franks, but also many other Jews hiding in Amsterdam. They simply ignored government requirements and provided Miep, Henk, and Koophuis with enough vegetables and bread for eight extra persons. Neither of these men knew the Franks or the Van Daans. Nor did they ask any questions. Helping fellow Dutch people escape Nazi terror gave them personal satisfaction. As a matter of fact, the baker refused to collect a cent.

The great risks the helpers took had bad effects on their health. Some could not even safely mention their help to their families. The tension and suspense often built up to such a point they could hardly talk. Mr. Koophuis developed a bleeding ulcer. But in spite of the strain, these good and brave people did not give up. Never complaining, they continued to do all they could for their Jewish friends.

And, as if helping the Franks and their friends were not enough, Miep and Henk were hiding one more person right in their own small apartment. He was a university student, wanted by the Nazis for refusing to sign a required student oath not to act against the German occupation. Miep and Henk kept this to themselves, shielding the matter even from the Franks because they knew it would worry them.

They Try to Occupy Their Time

“Time killers” is what Anne Frank called most of the things they did in the Secret Annexe. That was a good name, for they were really playing a waiting

game. They desperately hoped to remain in hiding until the United States and its allies freed Holland from Nazi control, when they could live normal lives again. They needed things to do to pass their time.

During the day, while workers were in the building below, the secret group chose quiet activities which required little talking and movement. It was the time to read the many books Miep supplied weekly. The women did needlework while Mr. Frank supervised the young people with school lessons in algebra, language, and history. Anne passed her time by trying to learn shorthand, and she and Margot did the bookkeeping for their father’s business. All of the occupants frequently napped the time away.

However, once the workers left the building for the night, the Secret Annexe came alive. This was the highlight of the long days, when everyone could relax and breathe somewhat normally. Visits from their friends below brightened the atmosphere with lively discussions of business, politics, and the war’s progress.

In the evenings, the group often gathered around the radio in the office downstairs. Tuned in to the BBC from London, they heard speeches by Queen Wilhelmina and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Later, when the Germans demanded that all radios be turned in, Mr. Koophuis salvaged one of his small ones. He gave it to the group in the Secret Annexe. Everyone in the Secret Annexe shared in the daily housekeeping activities of cooking, canning food, and cleaning.

They Contend with Many Problems Inside the Annexe

Hiding in the Secret Annexe had its problems. For one thing, the hidden people had to be extremely quiet as long as workers were in the building. A shoe falling on the floor, a sneeze, a cough might give them away. Therefore, they whispered and moved about in stockinged feet.

Since running water made noises in the building’s pipes, the sink and toilet could be used only



before and after the workers left. Once when the sewer backed up, water could not be run in the Annexe for three days. Another inconvenience was the absence of hot water and a bathtub in the Annexe. Water had to be heated on the stove. And to take baths, a washtub had to be carried to the hot-water faucets on the floors below.

The Secret Annexe windows at the far end of the building were something else to deal with. Since they could never be safely opened in the daytime, the heat inside the rooms became ever so intense during the summer months. Never could the thin curtains be pulled back, so the only view of the outdoors was through old curtains and dirty window glass. Nor could a light ever be turned on without covering these windows with blackout paper.

Getting rid of garbage was no simple matter either. Using the building trash cans was too risky. So it all had to be burned, even in the summer with all the windows closed!

Rats and fleas caused further misery. Peter's cat Mouschi and the warehouse cat Boche waged war on the building's rat pack. However, the cats were a mixed blessing. At one time their fleas infested the Annexe and all the people in it. But the group still enjoyed having the cats around.

Illness was also a real threat because a doctor could not be safely called to the hiding place. Fortunately, the dentist Mr. Dussel was able to handle some of the dental and medical problems. But for other illnesses, the hidden people took home remedies or simple medicines that their helpers provided. When Anne had trouble with her eyes, Mr. Frank considered sending her to an eye doctor with Miep. But he decided against it. They couldn't take the chance.

Finally, the cramped quarters created a highly stressful situation. The room Anne shared with Mr. Dussel, for example, was hardly more than a closet. A tall man with arms outstretched could touch opposite walls with his fingertips. Never could the people ever really be alone. Week after week and month after month they hovered together looking at the

same walls and the same faces. Tension mounted daily and created many arguments among them.

In spite of all these hardships, however, they were thankful to have this little secret place to hide. For example, after watching Jews in the streets from the curtained window, Anne writes, "It seems like the slave hunts of olden times. . . . I often see rows of good, innocent people with crying children, walking on and on, in charge of a couple of these chaps, bullied and knocked about until they almost drop. No one is spared—old people, babies, expectant mothers, the sick—each and all join in the march of death. How fortunate we are here, so well cared for and undisturbed. . . . I feel wicked sleeping in a warm bed, while my dearest friends have been knocked down or have fallen in a gutter somewhere out in the cold night."

They Face Problems from the Outside

To protect themselves, the hidden occupants could regulate what they did inside the Secret Annexe. Their control over people and conditions in the outside world was another matter, however.

On several occasions outsiders threatened their security. In February 1943 the owner of the Secret Annexe building, which the group's Dutch friends rented, sold it. Much to the shock of Kraler and Koophuis, the new owner arrived one day to inspect his new building. Fortunately, he believed their story of the lost key to the landing door that led to the swinging bookcase. Luckily, he never returned to look around again.

Also, on several occasions thieves broke into the warehouse at night. Each time a burglary occurred, the refugees were off guard, either listening to the BBC in the offices downstairs or laughing and talking loudly. In fact, one thief ran away when he saw Mr. Van Daan walking through the building. These robbers caused the group grave concern. If caught, would the thieves bargain with the police by offering information about Jews in hiding? Would they



possibly go for the Gestapo rewards being offered to informers who revealed the hiding places of Jews?

Another person also threatened their safety. One worker in the warehouse occasionally asked Kraler and Koophuis many suspicious questions about the layout of the back section of the building. Both the helpers and the hiders worried about what he might do.

Furthermore, the war was all around them. The Annexe occupants worried that outside conditions might force them to leave the security of their hiding place. As the war progressed, Holland came under fire. **Air raids**, gunfire, and bombings occurred frequently, especially at night. Fires and explosions that erupted nearby made the building tremble. The frightened occupants had no idea if their roof would be next. Just in case, they all had packed a bag for a quick getaway. But for Jews, entering the outside world was suicide. Where would they go? What would they do? Wouldn't they be recognized?

Nothing excited them more than the coming Allied invasion. However, they began to view even this with mixed feelings, for the Germans had come up with some **dire** threats. The Nazis had vowed that if the English invaded, they would flood parts of Holland, including Amsterdam. They also insisted they would drive the entire Dutch population to Germany on a forced march if they had to retreat.

Nor could the Jews in hiding escape the misery felt by everyone else around them. The worsening effects of the war and the terror of the military occupation reached them, too. As all Dutch people suffered from shortages of food, electricity, paper, soap, clothing, and nearly everything else, so did the refugees. Anne speaks many times of having to eat boiled rotten lettuce at each meal for weeks at a time. And the Nazis' special war on Jews made the group increasingly nervous. As the war had dragged on, and the Germans found themselves on the losing side, Nazi roundups had not lessened. Instead, they became more intense and Nazi treatment of Jews became more violent. In fact, by 1941 Hitler had come up with his "**final solution to the Jewish**

question," that is, how to get rid of all Jews in German lands. **Genocide**, the extermination of all Europe's Jews, was his answer.

No Jew was to remain alive. The **Einsatzgruppen**, special shooting squads with orders to wipe out Jewish communities, had followed the German armies into Russian territories. At the same time, Hitler had commanded other SS Jew hunters to "comb the rest of Europe from east to west" to round up every last Jewish man, woman, and child. All were to be deported to **gas chambers** in the **death camps** of Poland.

On March 27, 1943, Anne writes, "Rauter, one of the German big shots, has made a speech. All Jews must be out of the German-occupied countries before July 1. Between April 1 and May 1 the province of Utrecht must be cleaned out (as if the Jews are cockroaches). Between May 1 and June 1, the provinces of North and South Holland."

Anne speaks of hearing about Jewish children coming home from school and finding their parents gone. She writes of Jewish mothers returning from the store to find their homes locked up and their husbands and children missing. Miep also reported that the Van Daans' furniture had all been hauled away, and that many of the Franks' and Van Daans' friends had been deported.

The search for Jews in hiding was stepped up, too. Rewards were offered for information leading to their arrest. Snooping and prying on every street corner were the Gestapo, the plainclothes secret police. (*See photo 8.*) To round up the unarmed Jewish families, they used the German police, the NSB, and the army. All these Nazi activities made the Franks, the Van Daans, and Dussel very fearful and very anxious.

To add to their problems, their helpers got sick or had to be away from time to time. The Nazis called up Mr. Kraler for labor. Koophuis had an ulcer operation. Miep and Elli had illnesses that kept them away. Their absences put the Secret Annexe people more on edge, for these good Dutch friends offered them their only lifeline and security.



Discussion Questions

1. In your opinion, why did Mr. Frank wait until the family was on its way to tell his daughters where their hiding place would be?
2. Why do you think Margot quickly left with Miep to go to the Annexe before anyone else was ready to go? Why did Margot take a chance riding a bicycle?
3. Think of going on a vacation. Compare how you might pack to go on vacation with the way the Franks packed for their two-year "trip."
4. In case of bombing or fire, why would leaving the building be very dangerous for the Annexe occupants?
5. Why were black-market goods more expensive than the same goods on the regular market?
6. Why was outside help necessary if a Jew wished to hide from the Nazis?
7. How long did the Franks hide?
8. Why did the Franks give friends some valuables for safekeeping until after the war?
9. Why were the houses along the Dutch canals very, very narrow?
10. To provide necessary space, how did Dutch builders make up for the narrowness of their buildings along the canals?
11. Why couldn't the inner courtyards of some buildings be seen by neighboring buildings?
12. Why was it important that the people in the hiding place make no noise during the day?
13. Discuss some of the problems the Franks faced while hiding.
14. What made the Franks go into hiding earlier than they had planned?
15. Discuss some of the activities the people in the Annexe used to keep themselves busy during the day.
16. Why did Miep and Henk believe the Franks would worry if they knew about the university student hiding in their apartment?

Short Essays

1. Pretend you are one of the people in the Secret Annexe. Make two lists: (1) the advantages of living in the Secret Annexe; (2) the disadvantages. Now write a paper in which you compare the good and bad points of hiding there.
2. Put yourself in the place of a Dutch Jew in occupied Holland. How would you feel about the Nazis? about your fellow citizens? about yourself and your Jewishness? Write a paper about your feelings.

