

# GERMAN-BOHEMIAN

## HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

P. O. BOX 822 NEW ULM, MN. 56073

VOL. V No. 1 April, 1994

Louis Lindmeyer, Editor

### A Letter From Our President

At our annual business meeting held October 23, 1993 the three directors who wished to remain on the board were re-elected. They are LaVern Rippley, Benny Seifert and myself. Two board members resigned. Kurt Eisen requested his name be removed from nomination and Elroy Ubl had previously sent a letter of resignation.

The members could have placed names in nomination to fill the two vacancies, but a discussion arose as to whether our organization should remain at thirteen board of directors or drop to eleven. The same motion nominating the three directors, who were re-elected, yielded that decision to the board at their next meeting.

At the November 13, 1993 board meeting Pat Kretsch was appointed to the three year term vacated by Kurt Eisen and Charlotte Hoppe was appointed to fill the two years remaining in Elroy Ubl's term.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Pat and Charlotte to the board and congratulate LaVern and Benny on their re-election. I also want Kurt and Elroy to know that their presence will be missed. Both of them are considered incorporators of our organization. They helped draft our by-laws and articles of incorporation. The terms that initial directors served had to be staggered so that only one-third of the positions would be subject to election each year. Kurt served a one year term in 1990 and a three year term from 1990 to 1993. Elroy served a three year term from 1990 to 1992 and was in his first year of another three when he resigned.

The officers re-elected at the November 13th board meeting are Peggy Tauer as Secretary, George Portner as Treasurer, Louie Lindmeyer as Vice-president and myself, Paul Kretsch, as President. We are serving as the executive branch for 1994. I speak for all the board members when I say we are committed to keeping this organization active and headed in the right direction.

As for myself, taking care of business is a very important part of my job, but is not the only thing I am interested in doing. I feel that I should be the head cheerleader on this squad. I can't jump very well, but I can make alot of noise and I hope my enthusiasm rubs off. I grew up in an environment which included the German-Bohemian culture. Already as a young man I recognized a uniqueness about this culture. Belonging to this organization has taught me just how unique and special it is. This makes my job not one of labor, but rather one of love.

Sincerely,  
Paul Krestch  
President

### Coming Events

**April 15: Spring Dance at Turner Hall 8 PM**

**May 20-21: Garage Sale 519 9th No. St. New Ulm**

**May 21: General Member Meeting 9 AM  
Lower Level N.U. Public Library**

## **Letters . . .**

### **German-Bohemian Ties To Kansas from Oren Windholz**

A book review in the newsletter of the Society for German-American Studies caught my eye and led to the most interesting story of the German-Bohemians who migrated to the upper Midwest United States. Mr. Robert Paulson and I traded books and materials on our heritage. The German-Bohemians lived in an area of Bohemia just north of the region where settlers to Ellis, Kansas originated before migrating to Bukovina, the easternmost crownland of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

The Bohemian Germans of Bukovina saw some of their descendants migrate also to Canada and Brazil. Both the upper Midwest and Kansas immigrant groups share not only the same place of origin but many family names such as Aschenbrenner, Augustine, Fuchs, Lang, Reitmayer, Seidel, Tauscher, and Weber. Numerous other names are so similar in spelling as to suggest a relationship. Also among both immigrant groups the intermarriage among Catholic Czechs and Slovaks was evident. Ellis County also counts among the immigrants directly from Austria names found in the upper Midwest group, such as Helget, Polifka, Petrasek and Maier.

The German-Bohemian Heritage Society closely parallels the Bukovina Society of the Americas formed in Ellis, Kansas in 1988. The Bukovina Society also is composed of descendants of the Lutheran pioneers from the Rhine-Palatinate and Wuerttemberg in Germany to Bukovina and others with Bukovina ethnic origins.

## **The Bukovina Society Their Story**

Bukovina (land of beech trees) was a sparsely populated crownland of the Austrian Hungarian Empire in the late 1700's and early 1800's when the ruling Hapsburg family recruited German speaking people to settle its virgin forests. Lutherans from the Rhine-Palatinate and Wuerttemberg in Germany and Catholics from the Bohemian Forest of Austria (now in the Czech Republic) migrated to Bukovina to farm and work in the glassworks. Although a minority in the multicultural country, they lived in ethnic German villages and communities preserving their language and customs.

After one to two generations in Bukovia, land became scarce and the New World looked attractive. Agents for the railroads passed out flyers all over Europe to recruit the hard working ethnic Germans to settle along their lines. The newspapers brimmed with ads announcing free homestead land and in the case of South America, free passage. Bukovina Germans migrated to Canada, the United States, and south America. Some 70 families chose Ellis as their destination during a span of 15 years beginning in 1886. Later arrivals located in Rooks, Trego, Ness, and other Western Kansas Counties. Two other colonies were started, one in Yuma County, Colorado, and one in Lewis County, Washington. After 1900, some Bukovina Germans located in New York and Chicago. Stepping off the train in Western Kansas in the middle of a vast prairie was a stark contrast to their forested ancestral lands, but the hardy pioneers carved out successful lives as the largest concentration of Bukovina Germans in the

United States.

Bukovina no longer exists as a political entity. In 1919 the country was absorbed by Romania with the northern part ceded to the Soviet Union in 1947. The ancestral villages of the Ellis Bukovina Germans today are in Romania.

In 1988 a committee of interested individuals formed the Bukovina Society of the Americas to promote recognition of the Bukovina German people and encourage historical research of their heritage. In July of each year the society conducts an international convention. It has grown in size and representation with Bukovina German descendants returning to Ellis from all over the country. Membership is open to others of Bukovina heritage and interest, and many people from the United States, Canada, Brazil, Germany and several foreign countries have joined or participated.

The society has published three books and cooperates with other authors and publishers of Bukovina history.

Affiliation was made with the Landsmannschaft der Buchenland-deutschen of Germany, a similar society organized over 40 years ago, R. F. Kaindl Gesellschaft and numerous other international organizations. A computer project has begun to record the genealogies of members of the society. An archive has been designated with the Center for Ethnic Studies at Ft. Hays State University.

The Bukovina Society is operated entirely by volunteers. Speakers at all meetings, board of directors and spouse work, and labor for remodeling and operating the headquarters have all been generously donated. Expenses are funded by membership fees, sale of books, donations, and annual meeting registration fees.

The address of the Bukovina Society is P.O. Box 81, Ellis, Kansas, 67637.

## **Dance Date Correction**

In the December 1993 Newsletter the date for our next dance was listed incorrectly. The correct date is Friday, April 15. See article in this issue for further details.

## **A New Tragedy In a Blood-Stained Corner Of Czechoslovakia Part 2 (Reprinted from The German Tribune)**

And to whom was the little wayside chapel with the cross at the side of the road below the former Tasler Inn dedicated? The postman doesn't know. He doesn't care either. He is morose. Everyday, he says, he has to rush up the hill to empty the letterbox at the front of the church. "Last week there wasn't even one postcard in the mail." He wiped the sweat from his forehead with a finger and said: "Who wants to send greetings from this hole?" Well, why had he come today, Saturday? The letter box didn't have to be emptied today? "Orders from above! See for yourself. Almost 200 Sudeten Germans were here today. Just in case they want to send postcards from where they once lived, the post wants to give it priority. I have been watching out for two hours and what happened? Not one of them put a card in the box. Not even a letter."

It seems that the tragic chapter in the existence of this former German alpine village has come to an end. I didn't dare put the question about a new lease of life in Klenaupa. The environment surrounding the church, which was built on the orders of Joseph II, king of the Romans as he travelled through the Riesengebirge, has run into its greatest tragedy: the forests beneath the Schneekippe are dying or dead.

A young forester having a quiet beer looked annoyed and said: "You in the west can talk about dying forests. We can't say anything any more. Our forest is finished forever. We have planted Siberian birches and mountain ashes on the bald ridges and slopes but I can't look at it. And how it affects the Sudeten Germans I can only guess. They should stay where

they are because their home, their mountains, are kaputt."

The four or five hotels in the Grenzbauden area that once must have provided elegant accommodation are to be privatised. That means being auctioned off. The village is being tortured by the question of who would want to buy them. Three interested people, Sudeten Germans from Austria and Germany, have already come to have a look.

"And do you know what they said?" asked the forester lifting his glass emptying it and wiping his beard with his sleeve. "They said: we can't offer our guests a view of bald slopes and dead forests which breathe out the stench from the chemical works on the Polish side when the weather is humid or when the wind comes from the north - and make them pay as well! Then they got into their big cars and drove away. I tell you, they'll never come hear again."

"So what will happen to the hotels?" The man spat and grinned: "A recuperation home for children with lung trouble or breathing problems."

Czech priest Antonin Forbelsky has been in Kleinaupa for a year. When he arrived, there were never more than 10 people at mass in this, geographically the highest church in Bohemia. Most of the worshippers were either Sudeten Germans visiting their former home or Polish tourists - seldom business people from other parts of Bohemia who used the farm houses that once belonged to the Sudeten Germans as leisure homes. Most of these homes are now empty.

Czechs have been able for about a year to travel throughout Europe without visas. They do not want to spend holidays in the midst of a landscape with dead forests any more. The priest does not think any more about a rejuvenation of church life in Kleinaupa. He wants to keep the church active on Sundays and feast days. More he can not expect in the foreseeable future. The leisure homes will now be sold to private individuals, he says with a wistful grin. "And if these former German farmhouses are auctioned off to people who have not set foot in a church for more than 40 years, then I cannot expect that when they come for their ski holidays - no one wants to come to these polluted mountains in summer - they will stumble into church."

"And if the Sudeten Germans should come back?"

"None of them will return to Kleinaupa. Before they were driven out. Today they would flee from the dying landscape."

"What about you? Will you also leave Kleinaupa?" "No I intend to remain. I will pray and wait for a miracle, for someone to cultivate a landscape. I have time enough. I am not yet 30."

The mountain church remains silent. In 1941 it lost its bell which had been donated in 1791. And up here, the wind doesn't blow. It groans in the dry boughs, it howls quietly in the light-grey tree tops and it whispers in the arid grass. The silence of Kleinaupa is oppressive. The dead and dying alpine landscape needs a miracle. But it is too late for major miracles. And there is not even the likelihood of a minor miracle as happened in the late summer of 1945, two days after the last German mass was held. As the Germans with their 20 kilos of luggage were forced along the dusty country road down into the valley, the wild cherry trees burst into blossom for the second time that year. Today in Kleinaupa, there are no more wild cherry trees. They died years ago, before the pines and the firs.

## **FEEFHS CONVENTION**

### **First FEEFHS Convention To Feature Many Germanic Experts**

The first convention of the Federation of Eastern European History Societies, to be held in Salt Lake City on May 14-16, has a plethora of speakers who will speak on topics of interest to North American genealogists of Germanic origin, especially those whose ancestors came from the ex-Communist East. A major goal of FEEFHS is to disseminate new information about resources in or about these areas as widely and as rapidly as possible.

Larry O. Jensen, editor of the *German Genealogical Digest*, who has published a three-volume *Genealogical Handbook of German Research*, will speak on "Researching Ancestors from the Pre-World War I German Empire."

Topics dealing explicitly with Germans from Eastern Europe include: Irmgard Hein Ellingson, "The Swabian Migration to Bukovina;" Jo Ann Kuhr, "The Genealogical Resources of

the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia;" and Gwen Pritzgau, "LDS Resources for Black Sea Germans."

Talks by Howard Krushel on "A Visit to the Archives in Zhitomir and Rovno" and by Ewald Wuschke on "Protestant Research in Central Poland and Volhynia" will deal mostly with Germans.

The following multi-ethnic topics will also be of great interest to those with pertinent German ancestors: Patricia Eames, "The Russian-American Genealogical Archival Service;" Duncan Gardiner, "Multi-Ethnic Ancestry Research in the Archives of Slovakia and the Czech Republic;" Tom Noy, "LDS Resources for Jewish Genealogical Research;" and Brian Lenius, "Multi-Ethnic Research in the Former Austrian Crownland of Galicia."

Furthermore, the presentations by Jonathan Shea and William Hoffman on "Researching Catholic, Jewish and Orthodox Records in Poland" and by Douglas P. Holmes, a multi-ethnic expert on pre-World War I Hungary, as well as the keynote speech by FEEFHS President Charles Hall on "Field Research in Eastern Europe" will include information which is useful for Germanic genealogy, and talks on other countries, such as Lithuania, and on generic topics, e.g., computer genealogy.

Applications for FEEFHS memberships (\$15 US) or subscriptions to the *FEEFHS Newsletter* (\$10 US) should be mailed to Eva-Maria Bates, Treasurer, 2968 Glenmare, Salt Lake City, UT 84106. Convention registrations (\$50, including the opening banquet, with \$15 extra for the Sunday luncheon) should be sent to Kathryn Lichfield, Convention Registrar, 2169 Pheasant way, Salt Lake City, UT 84121. Those who wish to attend the United Polish Genealogical Societies Convention on May 12-14 may register for both for a reduced fee of \$75.

The December 1993 issue of the *FEEFHS Newsletter* has more comprehensive information and the March 1994 issue will include additional details.

The German-Bohemian Heritage Society has application forms and registration forms available.

For more information, contact: Edward R. Brandt, FEEFHS Convention Chair, 13 - 27th Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414-3101.

## Research Committee News

by Robert Paulson

### Valuable Research Information Uncovered

Maximilian Utz, our friend, tour guide and tireless researcher in the Czech Republic has uncovered some very valuable information for us in the church records in the Pilsen archives. While doing research in the church books of the Church Community of Berg (Hora sv. Václava), which includes the villages of Berg, Hostau, Natschetin, Schidfenau, Schilligkau, Trohatin and Zeisermühl, he discovered that the priest listed the persons from his parish who had emigrated to "Amerika", their house number, birth date, parents names, and the year that they left the parish. Listed below is the information that he found from the village of Trohatin. It is interesting to note that all the listings are for children born between 1856 and 1858. Our hope is that he will find additional information for us in the church books from other parishes.

### Trohatin

#### House No. Amerika

20	Anna Soukup, geb. 21 Aug. 1858 Eltern: Wenzel u. Marg. Soukup	1870
50	Maria Wagner, geb. 03 Sept. 1858 Eltern: Johann u. Marg. Wagner	1860
31	Andreas Gröbner, geb. 10 April 1857	1867

	Eltern: Josef u. Elizabeth Gröbner	
45 (Mutter) 20 ( Vater)	Johann Soukup, geb 24 Aug. 1856 Eltern: Wenzel u. Margaretha	1870
27	Anna Losleben, geb. 13 Jan. 1857 Eltern: Nikolaus u. Marg. Losleben	1870
20	Josef Lappas, geb 15 July 1856 Eltern: Adam u. Maria Lappas	?
44(Mutter) Berg Nr. 1 (V)	Georg Hein/Domayer, geb. 18 March 1855 Legitimiert durch nachfolgende Eheschließung der Eltern: Josef Domayer u. Maria Heigl	1872
21	Peter Braun, geb. 08 July 1856 Eltern: Anton u. Anna Braun	1867

### Land Records Available

Erich Fischer, Research Chairman of Heimatkreis Bishcofteinitz reports in the Heimatbote, newspaper of our homeland county, that the land record books for the Manor Heiligenkreuz/Weißensulz (Grundbücher: Herrschaft Heiligenkreuz/Weißensulz) 1607-1881 are now available for research.

This large land holding included the villages of Wistersitz, Fuchsberg, Neubäu, Schmolau, Haselberg, PlöB, Wenzeldorf, Rosendorf, Waldorf, Eisendorf, Heiligenkreuz, and Weißensulz.

These valuable records are held by the regional archives in Klattau. The address is: Statni Oblastni Archiv Klatovy, Masarykova 413/III, CZ-33901 Klatovy, Czech Republic.

## Egerlander's Life Was Bleak In the 1870's and 1880's by Emmet J. Hoffmann

A glimpse of what life was like for Egerlanders in the late decades of the 1800's is revealed in an autobiography written about a distant relative of mine who was born in Weshorsch in 1879. His name was Johann Remiger who was later to become Bishop of Prague. His Prague bishopric ended in 1946 when he, along with millions of other German-Bohemians, were expelled from Czechoslovakia during the Communist takeover.

Johann Remiger's birth was about the time when part of the Remiger family immigrated to Minnesota. Among them was my grandfather, Wenzel Remiger, who left the Weshorsch area in 1868 at age 27 and lived most of his remaining years in Stark Township in Brown County and Sleepy Eye. One of his seven daughters was my mother, Mary Remiger Hoffmann.

Johann Remiger descended from a small farmer (freeholder) family of southern Egerland, a region formerly known also as the Sudetenland. It is now part of the Czech Republic. He was born May 4, 1879 in house No. 55 in Weshorsch, district of Mies.

The author of the Johann Remiger book describes the view from Weshorsch as follows: "One can see a long range of the Bohemian Forest hills, from Tillenbergr over the Pfraumbergr, the Schwarzkoppe, the Osser and the Arber, into the distant southern heights."

Johann Remiger's father was the free-holder of a half-manor. This means he was the proprietor of half an estate or farm. An estate was considered to be about 30 hectares and a half-estate averaged about 20 hectares. A hectare is 2.47 acres. Johann Remiger's father, Joseph was born in Weshorsch in 1843, and he served in the Royal Imperial 35th Infantry Regiment in the war against Prussia in 1866. He returned from the war in poor health and died in 1890 at the age of 47. No doubt the war, along with many other factors, prompted some of the Remigers and other German-Bohemian kin to immigrate during this period.

The autobiography tells that Johann Remiger was called out of his high school class in Mies to be told of his father's death. The day of the funeral was the only day of school that Johann missed in his eight years of higher education.

The burden of the family well-being and management of the farm fell to the mother, the former Katharina Sperl from Worowitz in the adjacent district of Bischofteinitz.

Although the farm was not large, it was a life of toil and hardship for Katharina and her three children. The oldest was Barbara (Willinger), followed by Johann and the youngest, Wenzel. Both Johann and Wenzel later became priests.

While a bishop, Johann often talked about his boyhood. He experienced the life of a peasant. The family was poor and had meager savings. Cash was hard to come by. With frugal management Katharina was able to hang on to the farm and provide food for the family. They grew grain, hay and had some livestock.

Johann Remiger's early education was at the neighboring church village of Kapsch where he was soon recognized as a talented student. His was an 8-hour school day, including daily mass. It was a half hour walk to and from school, except during wintry snows when it took much longer. It was during one of those years when most of the village of Weshorsch burned but the Remiger house was spared.

Bishop Remiger, according to his autobiography, never lost touch with his kin and was proud of his peasant status. He came back often to the Weshorsch area to be with friends and relatives and enjoy their company. He loved walks in the Bohemian Forest and relished rock mushroom and cranberry picking. He had an overcoat with huge pockets which he often filled with mushrooms and cranberries.

Evidence of his humility is an incident that occurred one time when he was found riding third class on one of his train trips. When urged to move to a first class seat he replied in his Egerlandisch dialect: "Na, na, na! Dos Bleibt scho sua. I bin's sua gwaint." (Transliteration: No, no, no! I'll stay right here. I'm at home here.)

The annexation of the Sudeten province by the Third Reich in 1938 was viewed with fear by Bishop Remiger and his church activities were more and more constrained until his expulsion in 1946.

In 1959 a few days after his May 4 birthday Bishop Remiger died at the age of 80. He is buried in Liebfrauentempel (Cathedral) of Munich. The burial plate reads: "Hier erwartet den Tag der Aufstehung Excellenz Dr. Joh. Nep. Remiger, deutscher Weibischof von Prag." (Here awaiting the day of the Resurrection, Dr. Joh. Nepomuk Remiger, German Bishop of

Prague.)

The above is a brief summary of information contained in a 1964 book titled "Johannes Nepomuk Remiger, Der Letzte Weihbischof in Prag." published by Walter Dorskocil of Munich.

## **Elderberries** **Der Holunder Blume**

by Angie Portner

What are elderberries? Elderberry is a bush type plant that our forefathers were very familiar with. It grows like a snowball bush and is very similar in size. It grows 6 to 10 feet tall and is partial to growing along fence lines, at the edge of a grove, in pastures, and along roadsides. The products of the bush will provide goodies all winter long. This was very important to people who lived off the land.

The bushes produce white blossoms about the size of a saucer, with a real sweet aroma, and bloom from the end of June and into July. The white blossoms may be picked with a long stem, about 4 inches if possible, then dipped into a thin pancake or fritter batter and deep fried like donuts. Fry them until golden brown, remove and lay on a paper towel to absorb some of the grease. Sprinkle with powdered or white sugar and eat them while they are still warm. A very rich tasting goodie! Some East Bavarian restaurants serve this springtime treat.

The blossoms may be picked and hung to dry and used for tea, which is good tasting and good for colds and flu. In the fall these blossoms will turn into glistening black berries, ready to be picked and used for jellies, juice, pies and wine. These berries can also be purchased in grocery stores in Germany.

George and I were in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria last June and we saw the elderberry bushes growing everywhere along roadways, groves, etc. When we came home our bushes were not in bloom yet. They did bloom about the first week in July at which time we enjoyed our annual fried elderberry blossoms. This tradition was passed on to me by my grandfather Michael Meidl, who was from the Kaltenbraun, Austria area. Following my ancestor's traditions I have made fried elderberry blossoms, jellies, pies, tea and wine.

Our ancestors were poor and knew how to live off the land. They used whatever would grow on the land to survive. Maybe we could learn a lesson from the past. Stop and think about some of these old traditions and customs and see if we could do the same in our times. It would be very interesting to learn more about them.

So when June and July rolls around again, keep an eye out for the elderberry bushes and try some for yourself. I have dug up some small plants and transplanted them in our yard with great success.

If you have any questions call me at 507-359-2121.

***(Editors note - If anyone else out there has a custom or tradition they would like to share please write us a note.)***

## **Garage Sale** **by Janice Kretsch**

The German-Bohemian Heritage Singers will again be having their annual garage sale May 20 - 21, 1994

If you wish to donate, please drop items off at 519 Ninth North St., New Ulm on Thursday May 19th, after 5:00 p.m. Items should be clean, wearable/usable and priced. If you have any questions contact Dianne Tipton 354-3396 or Janice Kretsch 354-2763.

We wish to thank everyone who has contributed in the past. The money raised has

helped us to purchase sound equipment and we continue to update it as needed. This equipment has enabled us to expand our performances to various cities and events.

## **A Book Review**

**Ken Meter and Robert Paulson, Border People: The Böhmisch (German-Bohemians) in America (Minneapolis: Crossroads Resource Center, with the German-Bohemian Heritage Society, New Ulm, 1993), 32 pp.**

### **Reviewed by Ed Brandt**

This is the first English-language book which concentrates on the immigration history, genealogy and culture of the German-speaking immigrants from Bohemia, the western part of the Czech Republic. And it is indeed a remarkable beginning, with the authors promising more to come in a future "Heimatsbuch." The contents are so substantive, extensive and comprehensive that an adequate description would lead you to believe that it must be a book of 132, or even 232, pages, rather than 32.

It is important to note that the borders drawn after World War I left more German-speakers in Czechoslovakia than in any other country east of Germany and Austria, even though there were more than half a million in each of six East European countries.

The German-Bohemians lived in the Austrian portion of the Hapsburg Empire, in the mountainous rimland of the Czech Republic in an area resembling an elongated U lying on its side, but with far more of them adjacent to Germany (Bavaria, Saxony, Silesia) than to Austria. Thus they were not a homogeneous people. (Think of what the U.S. would be like if it consisted only of the state bordering on the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, Mexico and the Pacific.) This is illustrated by the sharply contrasting patterns of adaptation to American life found in the communities of New Ulm, Minnesota, and Luxemburg, Wisconsin.

The task facing the genealogist (or other researchers) is made more daunting by the fact that these immigrants were identified as Germans from Bohemia by immigration and census officials in only a modest minority of cases. Meter and Paulson have, however, provided an extremely well-researched account of key settlements in Minnesota (in the New Ulm area), Wisconsin (especially in Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Calumet, Wood and Winnebago counties) and Michigan (Menominee County).

Maps showing the German-populated areas of Bohemia and Moravia (which includes what used to be Austrian Silesia), as well as German-Bohemian settlements in six Midwestern states, are very helpful, even though the large number of settlements in Wisconsin makes that part of the regional map so crowded that one could wish for a separate, more detailed map of that state, similar to the one included for southwestern Minnesota.

The greatest delight for the genealogist will be the very large number of surnames of immigrant families who settled in specific towns or parishes. A significant minority of the names are in Slavic form, which may mean a Czech-German marriage, Slavicization of German names, Germanicization of people who were originally Czech, or lack of distinction between Czechs and Germans from Bohemia in certain records.

Anyone with German-speaking ancestors from any of the specifically mentioned areas would do well to check this volume for evidence of Bohemia as the place of emigration. *Border People* also identifies five historically German St. Paul Roman Catholic parishes and Winona as places where there were early parishioners from Bohemia. Moreover, the book is amply illustrated with old photographs from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Bohemia.

The authors concentrate on the areas they know best, which means that the material on Bohemia is limited largely to the Böhmerwald and the southern part of the Egerland (i.e., essentially Southwestern Bohemia). That leaves over half of the German-populated territory to be accounted for. A comprehensive description of the people who became known as "Sudetenland Germans" after World War I would also include Moravia, which likewise had a large number of German-speaking residents.

Although the authors provide a concise account of the various waves of German immigrants from Bohemia, they deal almost exclusively with the early immigrants to the Midwest, mostly farmers, but also craftsmen and workers in the lumber and grain milling industries. One is left to wonder how many of the later immigrants became factory workers in

the East and in which cities. However, the authors are quite frank in stating that this is not a complete account of all the German immigrants from all parts of Bohemia. Hopefully, other genealogists and historians will provide supplementary information. The impressiveness of this initial "kleines Lexikon" should provide a strong stimulus for doing so.

## **Spring Dance Scheduled**

**by Benny Siefert**

Friday April 15, 1994 (forget your IRS blues) is the date for our spring dance at Turner Hall in New Ulm. The entertainment begins at 8 p.m. The German-Bohemian All Stars and the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers will provide dance music and song. Admission is \$5.00 per person which includes a late evening lunch. Proceeds go to benefit our organization.

## **Letters**

**from Mariann Trembl  
Comfrey, MN**

"Winter Woes", and not a German-Bohemian in sight! Put all the record snow and cold behind us. Think about the heat and humidity of Heritagefest.

I wonder if many of our German-Bohemians are keeping up with their ancestry records? It was simply too cozy to do nothing, right?

My Norwegian neighbors to the north, are deep in family history. Don't give up the ship - maybe the Norwegians came over before the German-Bohemians. Our grade school teachers taught us it was Christopher Columbus who discovered America in 1492. Who can we question?

Think sping! Let's dance to a tune or two on Friday night, April 15, at Turner Hall. Get your taxes paid, and limber up those old joints. Dance, laugh, sing, enjoy lunch, and have fun.

## **Items For Sale**

**Border People: The Böhmsche  
(German-Bohemians) in America**

**by Ken Meter and Robert Paulson . . . . .**  
**. . . . . \$11.50**

**Deutsch-Böhmische Küche**

**A German-Bohemian Cookbook . . . . .**  
**. . . . . \$ 9.00**

**The Whoopee John Wilfahrt Dance Band  
His Bohemian-German Roots**

**by La Vern J. Rippley . . . . .**

.....\$ 6.00

**German-Bohemian Immigrant Monument**  
**A Souvenir Booklet of the Dedication**  
**by The German-Bohemian Heritage Society . . . . .**  
**. \$ 5.00**

**Picture Postcards of the German-Bohemian**  
**Monument**  
**Set of 2. One color & one b & w . . . . .**  
**..... \$ 1.50**

**All prices include sales tax and postage. Make checks payable to**  
**the German-Bohemian Heritage Socceity (GBHS) and mail to P.O.**  
**Box 822, New Ulm, MN 56073-0822**

## **Letters From Home**

*(Editor's note: the following is the second in a series of letters submitted to us for publication by Angie (Meidl) Portner)*

These are letters that Michael Meidl (grandfather to Angie Portner) received from his family from Kaltenbrun, Austria, from the years 1910 through 1920. They were written in German and translated by Prof. La Vern J. Rippley of St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN.

Letter from Franziska Wellner

11 June, 1911

Dear Brother and Sister-in-law,

We received your last letter in May and were happy. However it wasn't good to hear that you have arthritis and are no help to your family. And whenever the father or mother is sick, the whole family is sick because no one wants to work. But be patient. Our dear God won't leave you and your family. Dear brother, we are like our mother and won't reach a high age. Mother worked and saved so much that she could take care of us kids. Father died young. We lost everything in the fire. Although God has given mother many blessings and good luck, that we children have a part of the property. Mother had died; she's left everything here. Human beings can't take anything with them into eternity except good works. Dear brother, mother put up with alot from us kids. I think the other two brothers and sisters don't want a holy mass read for her. Sister was angry at us because we told you that mother had promised you 400g. You are sick and have 9 children. Why shouldn't you get something. You also have a child like the others. If it had been up to the children, you wouldn't have gotten anything. We won't do that though no matter what little value our money may have in America. Dear brother, on 18 May was the holy burial? (Firmung). I bought pictures because there weren't any here of mother. Dear brother, we are sending the 400g. with best wishes and don't forget mother as long as you live. Dear brother, the news is that on 22 May our son, who is in the

second class, was declared fit for the military. He was rendered into the supplementary reserve because father is weak. He has received 8 weeks. Summer was beautiful, grain crops were also great. We had the hay harvest. Dear Brother, I'm closing with many warm wishes to all of you, friends, and acquaintances too. Greetings to your married daughter and her husband. I'll remain your true and honest sister until death. Please write soon.

Franziska Wellner  
in Viertl, June 11, 1911

Franziska Wellner, Viertl

Dec. 2, 1911

Dear Brother,

We received your last letter with wedding picture and card. It was certainly a sad wedding because sister was sick. The weather is very beautiful. Since summer and fall we've had alot of mice which are damaging the fields. We've already thrashed. The grain crops were big. Both crops of hay brought little. Dear brother. We thrashed 40 rows of grain, 50 rows of oats and 10 rows of wheat. I don't think we thrash as much as you do. We would like to know whether the boy has taken over your farm, or did you buy him one. Because you didn't give sister Resi 100 guilder, she wants the 100g. from me. The two siblings, the brother and sister, are mad at us. There were no siblings here when mother died. That is sad. Mother wanted to make right because you received the least from the home. Everything of our thrifty mother's is now being cursed. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

We are all healthy. I wish you good health as well until we write again. By then you'll surely be ever healthier.

Greetings  
Your Sister Franziska

## **Schatskopf, the Game and Its Meaning** by Emmet J. Hoffmann

Where did the card game of Schafskopf originate and why does it survive and thrive among German-Bohemians in Brown County and elsewhere in the U.S. today? Schafskopf is still popular in Bavaria today as it was a favorite pastime in Egerland (the former German-Bohemian region from where many of our ancestors came from).

German dictionaries generally do not define Schafskopf as a card game at all. They describe Schafskopf (literally sheep's head) as someone who is a duffer (how I play golf), a blockhead (many of us German-Americans are accused of this) or numbskull (which includes others besides those of us who admit to Germanic descent).

My parents were avid Schafskopf players and they, along with their Stark Township, Brown County, neighbors, spent many cold winter evenings at some couple's home. It wasn't so much who was the winningest player of the evening as it was the conversation, the "gemütlichkeit" and the sausage lunch (feast?) at midnight which concluded the evening. There was no concern about late night eating because in the 20's and 30's guests often arrived by horse-drawn sleighs. Barns were large and housed the guest horses while the owners enjoyed their Schafskopf. Lots of calories were burned off when guests hitched their teams to their sleighs, bundled up to battle cold temperatures on their return home.

By modern measures it was almost a primitive life - there was no TV and radio was just becoming popular. Today's life style will never know the joy of neighborliness, the warmth of fellowship and the happy times our first generation ancestors experienced despite the hardships they endured in their new country. And Schafskopf survived.

Readers are invited to write the Newsletter editor with any information about the card game of Schafskopf, how it originated and why it continues to be a popular game in many parts of the country. If you are holding a few trump cards, please share your "tricks" with Newsletter readers.

# Stockau

submitted by Robert Paulson

Stockau, located 5km southwest of Ronsperg in a romantic valley setting, is a town of historic as well as aesthetic merit. The surrounding terrain is composed largely of rocky hills which have produced many notable finds of artifacts from the stone and bronze ages.

The birth of Stockau supposedly took place around 932 when a monastery was established there by Bavarian hermits. A chapel was built under the direction of duke Bretislav I von Böhmen at the location of the present "klosterkirsche" in 1047 in celebration of his victory over King Heinrich (Henry) III. In 1256 Pope Alexander IV recognized the various branches of resident hermits as an independent order. The monks took their vows of poverty and became the first Augustinian order to have a monastery in the Böhmen district. The monks were responsible for numerous achievements. Various settlements such as Waltersgrün and Frohhaus were founded by friars of the Stockau abbey (friars Walter Grünes and Feorgi Fronhauser). They practiced medicine, growing medicinal herbs in their Stockau gardens. The monks also established smithies and water and papermills. A regular economy developed. In 1421, however, the abbey fell into the hands of the Hussites. The friars were soon able to return. Pope Boniface gave the monastery over to the local rectors. After the death of King Wenzel (no date given), the Stockau monastery was destroyed and remained unoccupied until rebuilt in 1573 and again in 1595 (after being destroyed by fire) by Prior Kasper Malesius of Oppeln. In 1619 the Protestant orders transferred ownership of the monastery property away from the friars; they got the property back promptly after the battle on the "white mountain" near Prague. In 1641 and 1648 Stockau was overrun and plundered by Swedish hordes.

Architecturally, the monastery's dining hall was built in 1661 and the chancel 1666 (where the organ is found). Numerous scholars studied in the Stockau monastery during the 18th century and usually they finished their education at the University of Prague. In 1785 the monastery became incorporated into the Stockau community. The 12 friars became pastors and clergymen. The property was sold in 1800.

Stockau, 20 miles from Prague, grew gradually. It consisted of 24 residences in 1789; in 1839 there were 43; in 1913, 49 (pop. of 346). The villagers mainly farmed or were foresters to support themselves. As the tourist influx grew, in large part because of Burg Hirschstein, Stockau became known as the health/vacation resort it now is known as.

## Die Burg Hirschstein

submitted by Robert Paulson

This castle offers an exceptional view (next to Karlsburg, it is the castle highest in all of Germany) and is also rich in history. Proceeding southwards past Frohnau from Stockau, one can access the castle ruins via a forest path beginning near the chapel on the 753m high hill. The remnants appear to the observer as a mass of granite jutting from the hillside, in addition to the other rubble strewn over the surrounding area. The only remaining structure of the historical "Burg" is the watchtower. The rest of the castle has so eroded that it is hard to tell exactly where the walls and buildings stood. The old structure, a stone tower surrounded by a circular castle wall, proved inadequate as a residence for the most powerful nobility in medieval Germany; thus, it was doomed almost from its establishment of occupation by lesser vassals and nobility.

Castle Hirschstein ( or "Hirschenstein") has two histories; one, the romanticized version taken from Stockau's written lore, and another, more historically accurate version. In reality, the castle was used primarily as a piece of property to be traded and "leased" by most of its owners.

Burg Hirschstein was built between 1252 - 1272 under the authority of Protiwecz von Hirschentein", who came from the present-day village of Schüttwa. At the beginning of the

14th century, the Hirschenstriner, as the family was named, were among the most important royal families in the region. However, splits among the descendents occurred due to inheritance disputes. Various parts of their property passed into other hands. In 1328 Burg Hirschtein was sold to duke Henry of Bavaria. In 1331 it was acquired by bishop John of Prague and occupied by the knight Zbislaw. Meanwhile, the old Hirschenstein family still resided in the area. Through the sale of their other property, notably castle Stammburg, they acquired enough resources to be able to fund a larger, more important castle presently known as Burg Herrnstein (from "Neu-Hirschenstein"). The family emblem, which depicts a stag deer, originated in Schüttwa, and not at the actual castle Hirschstein.

Not much is know about the castle during the 14th century while it was owned by the bishop. In approximately 1397 the castle was mortgaged to Peter Eberswein von Hradischt, a nobleman from Plisen, because of the bishop's fears that the Hussites would overrun it. In 1427 the castle was used as a military strongpost by magistrates from Pilsen, the von Kolowrat brothers (the "Tauser" were threatening the area). The ownership passed to knight Tibarz von Wolfstein in 1437 and later, in exchange for other properties, to Zdenko Kolwin von Ramsperg and his sons Dobrohost and Brzenko. However, their ownership was threatened because the Church of Prague planned to liquidate its property. Fortunately for them, their lord, King Georg, purchased it. However, Dobrohost allied himself with the traitorous Grünberger clan. During the ensuing civil war, Dobrohost bought the services of German mercenaries, who pillaged and sacked the entire surrounding countryside from 1465-67. After the mercenaries were finnally subdued by the king's forces, Dobrohost declared peace and vassaldom later was split up among Dobrohost's sons, of who the oldest, Zdenko, inherited Hirschtein. In 1510 Zdenko Dobrohost von Ronsperg, as he was known, allowed bands of robbers and thieves to use his castles Hirschtein and Ronsperg as a base for their criminal activities. As a result he was forced to flee to Bavaria by Duke Zdenko Lew von Rosenthal. The castle Hirschstein, left in a state of disrepair, finally was destroyed in the early 16th century.

Although somewhat tarnished, the title Hirschtein lived on when prior Simon Brosius of the Prague Cathedral added to his family name the title "von Hirschstein". His descendants carried the name until 1641, when the family line died.

## **G-B Heritage Singers Producing Cassette**

As this edition of the newsletter goes to print the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers are in the process of producing a cassette of many of their most requested songs. The as of yet unnamed cassette features songs in the German language as well as in the German-Bohemian dialect. This cassette will be a "must have" for anyone interested in the German-Bohemian culture and heritage and will make a fine gift idea.

The cassette is being recorded by Bill Ness of Shady Grove Music, Sound and Recording, New Ulm. The singers hope to have the cassette ready for sale by the end of May.

## **Donate To German Park**

There has been a fundraising drive started for the renovation of German Park in New Ulm. This park is of special interest to our organization because the German-Bohemian Immigrant Monument is located there.

Our president Paul Krestch is one of the committee members of the fundraising group known as the Friends of German Park.

If you wish to donate to this project you may give directly to them and receive individual recognition. Instead you may wish to donate to the park project through our organization. Donations received by us would be recognized as coming from the GBHS and you would receive recognition by a listing of your name in our newsletter. Whichever way you

choose to donate, German Park will be the winner.

If you have any questions concerning the park project please contact us. Thank you!

## **German-Bohemian Family Data Base To Be Updated**

Several years ago the German-Bohemian Family Data Base was started by the Research Committee. Many members of the GBHS submitted data about their families in various formats. Many sent information on their membership applications. Some sent interesting letters containing information, while others submitted detailed genealogical charts. Much valuable information was gathered, however, it came in no standard format.

In an effort to upgrade and update our G-B Family Data Base, we are asking everyone who has information about their G-B families, to submit this information on the DATA BASE FORM that is included with this newsletter. We are asking those of you that had already submitted information to us as well as those who had not as yet sent your information. If you need additional forms, feel free to make photo copies. Fill out as much of the form as you can. It is not necessary to have all the information requested. Do what you can. Any information on your family will be of value.

Mail your completed forms as soon as possible to: German-Bohemian Heritage Society, Research Committee, P.O. Box 822, New Ulm, MN 56073.

We hope to have all the data entered, and a copy of the Data Base ready to share with you at our General Meeting on May 21.

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