



# German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter

the

# Heimatbrief

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**Vol. IX No. 4 December 1998 Louis Lindmeyer, Editor**

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## A Letter From Our President

Dear Members,

I would like to continue the process of mentioning the members names who volunteer a lot of their time helping our organization. I started this back in the June newsletter and I'm doing it to make you aware that there are other people besides our board of directors that are active.

This time the first person I'm going to write about is Ruth Hornick. Until March 29 of this year. Ruth lived in Comfrey, MN, but unfortunately lost her home to a tornado and now resides in Sleepy Eve, MN. The monster that measured a mile and a quarter wide hasn't dampened her spirits because she is still finding time to help us and remains active helping others as well.

Ruth is especially helpful in the areas of sales and membership. She helps prepare notices and sales material for mailing and does a lot of filing, folding, and copying. Those attending our membership meetings have the chance to meet Ruth because she can usually be found at a table helping with the registration book and the for-sale items that are found there. Genealogical research is another area that Ruth has been involved in and our organization has received her help there too.

On behalf of all our members I would like to take this opportunity, to thank Ruth Hornick for all she is doing for us. She has a good heart, and we will always be grateful. As a note of interest, Ruth's "good heart" pumps Irish blood through it and that makes her willingness to help our German-Bohemian society even more special.

Now I want to draw your attention to a group of people that put in many hours working for this organization. Since 1988 I have been the leader of the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers and have witnessed the growth of our performing group. We have proven to be a very vocal and visible part of this society. This year we will be giving about 35 performances and last year it was around 30. We could have done more, but consider these amounts manageable. Usually a performance is one hour long and it takes at least 16 musical numbers to fill out this hour. We can give our audiences a good variety because presently our index includes 98 different arrangements.

When we started performing back in 1988, we had six vocalists and two musicians. For a while we had a total of twenty performers, but today we consist of fifteen. This now gives us eight vocalists and seven musicians. Although a lot of money is raised, these performers have never received any pay for the time spent rehearsing and performing. Every 'one volunteers their time and the money goes to the society. It is used for paying rent, purchasing equipment, cutting tapes, and other things necessary to keep the performing group active. Using this year as an example, the average time an individual will devote towards being a performer can easily reach 250 hours. This calculation includes the time spent on practicing, performing,

setting up, taking down, and traveling.

Some of the performers are board members but I am going to mention their names along with all the other people. Because of the commitment that is made I feel everyone involved with the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers deserves mentioning and I don't want to intentionally leave anyone out. For the same reason, I am going to give you the names of the people that no longer perform with us. The contribution they made should not go unnoticed. There is one person I do want to single out and his name is Artie Dietz. Although Artie is no longer with us physically his spirit still exists in our group. As most of you will recall he passed away last year in August and we all miss him. The rest of the names I will list in alphabetical order as follows. Stephen Brandel, Ella Eisen, Kurt Eisen, Jo Elijah, Bill Embacher, Dianne Embacher, Charlotte Kastanek, Joleen Keckstein, Ernest Kretsch, Janice Kretsch, Patrick Kretsch, Louis Lindmeyer, Ruth Mowan, Angeline Portner, Benny Seifert, Judy Sellner, Marlyn Sellner, David Suess, Heidi Vorwerk, Rita Waibel, Arlene Woratschka, Norbert Woratschka, Jeanette Ziegler, Ken Ziegler.

For almost nine years I have been wearing two hats. One I wear when acting as the leader of the performing group and the other as the president of the society. I am dedicated to these two roles and I am filled with excitement when I see something being accomplished. Hats off to the people involved with the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers. You are helping to keep alive our ancestors' musical tradition and that benefits our whole society.

All of the people I have mentioned are a benefit to us. Their willingness to give us their time and talent make them very special and I felt it was time you find out who they are.

Paul Kretsch,  
President

## Yearly Dues Are Due

This is the time of year that we once again call on you to support our organization by paying your dues. Your \$10.00 yearly dues not only pays for this newsletter, but also allows the Board of Directors to make expenditures for things such as our new library, finance publications such as our cookbook and several heritage books that we have published. Your dues also allow us to hold informative meetings with excellent guest speakers. Please continue to support our efforts to preserve or delicate German-Bohemian heritage.

**Dues are due by December 31.** Please mail your check to GBHS, P.O. Box 822, New Ulm, MN., 56073-0822. Thank you!

## Queries

Trying to locate Bohemian village of (phonetic spelling) "Rabotig" or "Rhapsic" where Frank Zadnichek (or Zednichek) was born on January 19, 1840. Frank married Fannie Zatcheka (or Zatechka) Kromple (or Krouple), born March 1826. They later immigrated to Quarry, IA, in 1869. Also unable to locate port of departure, the name of vessel they came on, nor American port of entry. Any information on the village, family names or their immigration to America will be sincerely appreciated. I received my first copy of the newsletter and enjoyed it very much. The next issue should be here soon and I look forward to it.

Again, thank you.

Contact: Ernesta Roberts  
1048 East Riverside Drive #3  
Truth or Consequences, NM 87901-2956

# Letters From The Homeland

Submitted by Father Eugene Hackert

*These letters are from the German-Bohemian homeland to family members in USA. The letters are held by Joe Groebner,*

21004 County Highway 1, Clements, MN., 56224-0032, (507)692-2247, and are from his bachelor uncle Albert Groebner.  
Translated by Dorothea Young.

*These letters a wonderful insight into thoughts and pains of family members who remained in the homeland.*

*Used with permission.*

### **Rindl, February 12, 1907**

Dear Children,

Two months have passed and I have not answered your letter yet. I chose the carnival days for doing so.

Dear Children, in your letter you asked, if I have forgotten you. No. Maybe I am thinking more often about you than you of me. What shall I write? All the changes in Rindl are hard to put into words. The newest accomplishments are: we have Fire Fighters and a Fire Truck. Last year a survey was taken for the planned railway, that shall run below Rindl, from Buchschachl over the Rindler pastures below Buerkeln towards the so-called Loh and Muttersdorf. Nobody knows when they will start with the project. It took three years already from Stankau to Ronsperg, and it shall be continued up to Hostau this year. But nobody is sure about that. I also want to let you know that we are retired and that we do not like it very much. Franz works in Reid at Ganuschens', Andreas is working in Saxonia in a brick factory the last two summers. Had I money, I would buy a "Wirtschaft" (small restaurant with bar) once more. Joseph is married to Anna Walter. We do not like her. She is always walking around that nobody knows if she feels well or bad. Franz Tuhek got married to Resi Walter last fall. His wife died February 6, 1905. They had eight children - another eight might easily come out of the second marriage.

We are pretty much all right talking about our health and we hope the same of you. Sister Anna got married to Andreas Hartl. Up to now there are no children yet. Three died already. He has house No. 15.

You ask, if one of the boys wants to follow you. Andreas told us that he would like to go, but mother said, she will not let anyone go anymore as long as she is alive. After her death they can do whatever they want. Last year they had to enlist, but none was taken. Nobody knows how it will look this year.

We have a very cold winter and lots of snow this year. Summer brought lots of rain. Cattle is now very expensive here. If I were about 20 years younger, I would follow you at once, but nobody wants such an old body anymore, even though we are supposed to be along as always.

With this we want to end our letter. Many hearty greetings to all together, including Schroefer and both of the Weltsches. Greetings also from Kuehnl of Bischofsteinitz, whom I met by chance in Ronsperg. He told me, should I write, I shall send greetings to you. I would like to know how Joseph Schroefer is doing and if he is still alive.

Again many greetings to all and also to Anton's mother-in-law. Be good to each other. I wish all of you a happy New Year, good health and long life and hope to get your answer soon. Adieu.

### **Rindl, November 7, 1909**

Dear Children all together,

Another year has passed since we heard from each other. We all are all right and we hope the same of you. (Good health), this is the best in this world. I believe that my life will not last much longer. If something comes up (in this age) a person can see death approaching.

Dear children, with this letter we are sending you four pictures. The 2 cm ones show Johann and Anton, the small one brother Andreas and we two are shown on the big picture with Katharina's daughter, Theresia Helget. Andreas' pictures were made in Pilsen, our's in Muttersdorf during the feast of St. Bartholomaeus. Photographer was L. Teinitz. Andreas came home after 2 years in the military. He will leave after Easter and will return at the time of "Kirchweihe" (A feast celebrated all over in the old countries at this late time of fall.). Next year both boys will go to work in Saxonia.

We had a bad summer this year. It rained all the time. The small grain turned out all right but potatoes did not grow. It was too wet.

Dear children, our greatest wish is that we can see each other one more time and talk to each other person to person. But we believe that this will not come true. Mother is often crying, for she had so easily permitted Anton to leave at an young age. When I came back from Plan, we both wept. We said, that if he were still here, we would not let him go. I can still see dear Anton leaning at the wall at the train station, when we had to part. It is hard for me to take it, that I expelled him, that I allowed him to go, even though I think you will be better off there than here, had you stayed on. As you are writing to us - it hurts to be separated. A visit to us is too expensive. To leave the family behind is difficult also, since one does not know what might happen during this long trip. We cannot ask this of you. Andreas tells us often, that he would like to follow you, but mother tells him every time, that she will not let anyone leave anymore so long as she is alive. I am already old and cannot travel across the water anymore. Alone during the short trip from Ronsperg to Teinitz I get dizzy on the train and have to vomit.

Please, answer soon. Tell us how all of you are faring. I wonder, if Engelschneider from Schilligau has seen you, or Hamerschmid, who visited his son last summer. He told me, that he wanted to visit you.

Sister Anna has two boys: Joseph, 1 year old, and Andreas, 5 weeks old. Joseph Hard died on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ (Fronleichnam). He was only 8 days down, but sick a long time before. Many things here in Rindl have changed. Katarina and the two boys are still with us, the two brothers are still free and single.

We wish you good and healthy Christmas Holidays and a Happy New Year, contentment, long life and happiness.

### **Rindl, November 6, 1910**

Dear son Anton,

We received your letter and learned that you are in good health. Up to now it is the same here. But it might not last very long anymore, because age is against us and it could take only little to take us away. We would like so much to see you once more in our life time. This wish seems not to be coming true. You are not coming to visit us and we cannot take the journey over the water anymore.

Dear Son, you wanted to know how old you are. You were born February 17, 1875.

Here many things have changed since you left. A school house is standing where the old fire house was. We have fire fighters and a fire truck. The community owns two planters. Cutters and threshing machines are owned by each farmer. Each small operator has a cutter. The farmers also have a "Goeppel", that the steers have to pull during the threshing process and they own a cutter each.

There is a school house in Heid, also in the Schillgkau, in Hischsteinbaeul and Trohatin.

We would like you to send us a photo of your family, that we can see your children on the picture.

This year summer was bad. It rained every day and even today. The first snow arrived on November 2. The harvest of hay and small grain was bad and it was difficult to get it out of the fields. Potatoes and cabbage produced better and there was also enough hay. Many people blamed the comet for this. You might have seen it in America too. The newspapers reported, that the world would come to an end on May 18 and many people were very much afraid. The papers also wrote that the tail of the star, that we could see, was poisonous, how long it was and where it could be watched. We saw it only 2 nights over the area of Stadlern.

The two brothers, Andreas and Franz, have been in Saxonia during this summer. They were working in a brick factory in Chemnitz. In November (Feast of Kirchweihe) they returned home. Andreas had to report to the Army for 4 weeks for boot camp. Katarina, with her girls, is now living with us. During winter we will be six people. Mother still cries that she permitted you to leave. She is repeating over and over again, that she will not let anyone of her children go while she is living. Andreas told us that he would go at once.

Dear Son, I still can see you standing at the wall in Plan, when we had to part. Even now my heart is sinking when I am

thinking of this moments and my eyes are filling with tears. You are better off over there than here, as you told us. Keep on living in peace and in contentment with each other. Especially, honor your mother-in-law and show respect for her and help her when she needs it. Always remember, you too will get old and will be depending upon your children. A hearty greeting to her from me and mother.

**Rindl, April 6, 1920**

Dear Uncles,

I have to give you sad news. Our grandfather died on March 25 in the afternoon. He had an easy death. The day before he was a little mixed up. He told me to give him the letter from America that arrived earlier. I told him that there was no letter yet, but he thought there had to be one. Our dear grandfather thought of everyone, even in those days. He longed for a letter from you. Dearest Uncles, he had to endure lots of bad luck. His daughter Anna died very young and he did not see his son George anymore nor Andreas. Franz is in Zeisermuehl, where his wife came from. Two of Andreas' sons are here and a daughter of Franz. He is not married yet, because they do not know anything specific about Andreas. Grandfather gave Franz the cow. Mother and I are pretty bad off. The money that mother and I had saved up was invested in War Bonds by grandfather and so we have nothing. I will never forget our dear grandparents. They gave us a living and to eat. He often wondered what would happen to us after his death. He hoped, that the good Lord would let him see the summer. Everything he laid in the hand of the Lord. He said often, that if he would not be taken into heaven, who would have a chance. All day long he read in the prayer book or prayed the rosary. Again and again he was longing for grandmother. He could not do anything else anymore.

We have wet weather. Everything is planted, only the potatoes are not in the ground yet. Mother said often that we should go to America too. It would be easier for us over there. If it only would not be so far away. I would easily be convinced to go, but the journey is pretty dangerous. The money you sent was used for the burial. Everything is terribly expensive. The casket alone cost 120 Kronen. We thank you again for the money.

I will finish my letter with cordial greetings to all of you. We wish you happy and healthy Pentecost holidays. When grandfather was still writing, he always said, "when I do not live anymore, then Resi will have to write:. I hope that you will answer soon.

Again greetings from me, Theresia, and from my mother, from friends and relatives.

## Four Candles

It happened during the December cold in the historic year, 1945. The time of year was cold and so were the hearts of men. Fear and anxiety froze the souls of the defeated while hatred and desire for revenge froze the sympathy and compassion of the victors. Just rewards fell only upon a very few of those who were truly responsible and those who were weak and innocent had to bear the heaviest burden of grief.

In Neutitschein a young woman, Anni Wagner, lived in one room in a cellar on Br ckenstrasse with her two little daughters and her mother. Annelies was three years old and little Dorli was barely one and a half. The children did not know their father. If they were lucky he was still alive somewhere in a far off prisoner of war camp. Because of the cold and malnutrition little Dorli had fallen seriously ill. The little girl's cheeks glowed, her pulse sped and her breathing was difficult. As for a doctor, at that time the German doctor was not allowed to assist any Germans. But when a mother is fighting for the life of her child they do not worry about prohibitions and absurd laws.

The December nights of 1945 also were a little merciful for they cast their shadows over Czechs and Germans alike at an early hour. Since street lights were sparse, Frau Wagner crept into the twilight wrapped in a shawl that concealed the awful white "N" (meaning "Nemec" or "German") on the back of her clothing and made her way to the office of the nearest Czech doctor, Doctor Anatol Slavik. Trembling with cold and fear she asked to be admitted. The servant girl recognized her as a German at once and wanted to throw her out. But Frau Wagner would not give in and the sounds of a loud shouting match in Czech and German between the two women finally got the attention of the doctor himself. He called out, "What on earth is going on!?"

The young maid explained patiently that there was an impudent German who wanted to see him and they were trying to throw

her out. At that Frau Wagner collapsed and knelt on the floor, weeping in despair. The doctor lifted her up and took her to his consultation room and told the maid to disappear. After the young woman had calmed down somewhat he was finally able to learn why she had come. "Pane doktore, mein Kind, eineinhalb Jahre, Fieber, Fieber, Fieber!" (Please doctor, my child, one and a half years old, fever, fever, fever!")

"I can't help you. You know very well it is forbidden. Go home!"

"On! You speak German! My child, a little girl, will die if you do not come. Please, please, please! "

"I dare not! You certainly know that! An now go to your home! Where do you live?"

"Br ckenstrasse 34, in the cellar." And then he repeated so loudly, he almost screamed and what he said was certainly heard throughout the house, "Go home! I can't come. Do you understand? Go! Get out!"

Frau Wagner went out into the hostile cold of that dark December evening feeling nothing but deepest despair. As she arrived at home her mother knelt praying at the bedside of the sick child.

"God in heaven," she said, "what sort of icy desert have you let the people of this beautiful country enter? "

An hour passed and the Czech doctor suddenly appeared at the cellar room. Keeping faith with his Hiptocratic Oath, he took great personal risk to come secretly to the miserable German room and did what humanity required. But Doctor Anotla Slavik could do nothing to help. Dorli had Diphtheria. The doctor was desperate because he had nothing to effect a cure at hand or in his office.

"If your child is not in the hospital by tomorrow she will sure die."

The words hung in the small room like a threatening cloud hardened to ice. A frustrated doctor, a worried mother -- both knew that no German child would be taken into the hospital. It was a death sentence.

But God always gives us the means we need when our need is greatest. Frau Wagner recalled that were was a "mixed" family living in the house opposite from their cellar hovel. They had only recently arrived here. The wife was German and the husband was Czech. But what help could she hope for from them? Would she bring the wife into danger unnecessarily by speaking to them? Did it make any sense at all to go to this family named Busek?

She did not know but somehow she still had to go to them, to ask them for help and to tell them of her need and her grief. The night by Dorli's sickbed was unbearably long and the darkness lasted well into the morning. Frau Wagner used the winter darkness to go to the Busek family residence. But she had scarcely entered the apartment when she thought she must run back out at once. A Czech policeman sat at the Busek breakfast table, wearing insignia that indicated he was of a high rank. Fear cause a whirl of thoughts that raced around in her head. "Dorli... policeman ... my Dorli ... the policeman ... my dying child ... this Czech policeman ... fear ... worry ... fear ...why had he come here?"

But Mrs. Busek realized how anxious Frau Wagner was and, somewhat stiffly, offered her a chair. "What is wrong? Can we help you?"

Hearing the German word "helfen" (help) must have solved the problem for the young woman. So it happened that she was able to outline the situation and, above all, to explain how seriously ill her little daughter was. She dared not look at the policeman -- he was the brother of Herr Busek -- while she spoke. But then God caused a miracle.

The policeman picked up his pistol belt and buckled it around his waist. "Come, I will go with you," he said in a manner that was neither kind nor gruff but which put an end to the women's conversation.

Reluctant but trusting, Frau Wagner left with him. But before they were in the street he demanded, "Where is your letter 'N'? It doesn't show if it is under your shawl!"

She took the wrap off her chilly shoulders so that the "N" would be visible. She was conscious of a feeling of cold dread that

wanted to take hold of her but in some unexplainable way she was able to control it and to trust that everything would be all right.

"You know, a policeman who is leading a Nemka (a German) is never stopped. And no one here knows that I am on vacation."

Although his words did not make sense to her they gave her a spark of hope. When Frau Wagner went into the cellar room with the uniformed policeman her mother's face went white as chalk.

"Bring the little one. Wrap her in any blanket or comforter that you have. Then we will go to the hospital. The child is now my daughter named Dora Busekova. Do you understand? When was she born?"

"On October 20, 1944."

"I have to remember that."

With feverish urgency the two women wrapped up the child who was struggling feebly for air. They wavered between suspicion and trust, between fear and hope.

"Come on!"

The strange pair traveled down Brckenstrasse through a whirling flurry of snow. They turned onto Niedertorstrasse and arrived at the city plaza. The sleepless night and hunger had exhausted the mother who pressed the child wrapped in a blanket and pillow to her breast. She fought her way forward through the snow, stooped over and shuffling and stumbling along. When they reached the city plaza her strength was at its end. Until then the policeman had gone alongside her in silence.

"Give her to me! You can't carry her any more."

Silently she gave him the living bundle.

"And now listen to me!"

He seemed to struggle with the words that followed. "Why am I doing this? I was in the service and stationed in Berlin. I had a wife and two children. A boy and a girl. Now I only have the boy. My wife and daughter are dead. Bombs."

They had crossed the plaza. After a pause he spoke again. "I can only say that if you have cause for grief during the next few days you should know that there is someone else who weeps with you."

She looked at him carefully from the side. Snowflakes hit the strange man in the face the same as her. They melted into large drops of water. But perhaps they were really two people's tears.

They went on in silence. As they arrived at the other end of the city on the Obertorstrasse and drew near to the hospital he still carried the child. He began to speak again. "You dare not go in. Wait out here for Policeman Busek."

And so she did. Her heart seemed to lighten a little as she saw the man disappear through the hospital gate with her child. Time seemed to stand still, minutes seemed to be hours. In reality the policeman was gone only half an hour when he returned carrying the blanket and pillow. He showed her the window of the room where Dorli lay. Then they started on their way back.



He showed her the window of the room where Dorli lay. Then they started on their way back.

The merciful snowflakes soon hid the white "N" on the German woman's back. He spoke to her in an almost "official" manner that suggested she ask no questions and follow his orders.

"You cannot visit your child; and do not come to me with

questions. It is Tuesday, December 11 today. I will look in at the hospital on Thursday. That is what the doctor and I agreed. If everything is all right I will put a candle in my sister-in-law's window around 6:00 o'clock in the evening but only for a short time. If there is no candle I will come to you in person. I will go to the hospital again on Sunday and will put a candle in the window around 6:00 o'clock. And on the next week on Sunday, that will be December 23, I will do the same. An if it is possible I will signal with two lights. That will signify that you can pick up your Dora -- my Dora Busekova -- on Monday evening at my sister-in-law's home. That is Christmas Eve."

At first Frau Anni Wagner stared at the policeman without a word. Then she suddenly asked, "What is your name?"

"What does that matter? Why do you ask? My name is Josef Busek."

"Herr Busek, today you are my Saint Josef."

On the next Wednesday, suppressing her hears, Frau Wagner stole out to the hospital at dusk just to be near her child as she prayed. The window of the quarantine ward was lit up but it was empty and mute. And three-year-old Annelies and her grandmother were waiting at home.

On Thursday evening at 6:00 o'clock there was a candle glowing for a few minutes in the house diagonally across from Frau Wagner's cellar room. At no previous time in her life until that day had an Advent candle shone so brightly or warmed Frau Wagner's heart more than that one on that evening. On Sunday the candle appeared there, glowing once more. Then came a long, anxious week. But on the next Sunday before Christmas Eve there were two flames shining in the window across the way. They were brighter than all the lights that shown that day. They not only illuminated the heart of a young mother who would soon have her child back in her arms, but they were also a sign of hope and of how love can still overcome hatred. Now there would be a real Christmas for this mother and her child.

This happened during Advent in 1945 in Neutitschein, a little city in eastern Sudetenland.

(Author's note: This story is true but the names of the characters have been changed.)

## Our Readers Write

Dear Sirs:

Enjoyed your article " A Saint from Bohemia". Not only do I belong to St. John Neumann Church in Powhatan, Virginia, but my ancestors were from the same area as St. John Neumann.

Sincerely,

Lucille Varsho Simpson

## Holiday Traditions of Egerland

By Karen Hobbs.

The legendary St. Nikolaus was Bishop Nikolaus Ruprecht of Salzburg (d. 717) who brought Christianity to our land. His feast day on December 6 is sometimes called Ruprectstag (Ruprecht's day).

The eve of the feast of St. Nikolaus was a worrisome time for children if they were not certain they had been good. On the feast of St. Nikolaus children who were stubborn and disobedient were threatened with the rod -- a custom that is still practiced today.

On Christmas Eve it was customary in most communities for the boys to go "Gellersingen." Equipped with cow bells, metal pots, scythes and hammers with which to make noise, they went from house to house during the midnight hour and sang old "Gellerlied." Unfortunately the words for some of these old songs could not be found to include here.

Gellersingen could be quite dangerous. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it sometimes happened that some of those who participated would get into a quarrel and end by brawling in the street. Once, in Grasset, such a brawl ended with

manslaughter. There are many "Marterl Stein" (also called "S hnkreuze", atonement crosses; they are crosses marking the point where a death occurred) that recall the unfortunate results of a Gellersingen brawl. On Christmas Day people greeted each other with various phrases that recalled the feast day. "Gl kselige Feiertag, neugeborener Heiland (Blissful holiday, newborn savior)," is one example.

On New Year's Eve (Sylvester Abend) Gellersingen included New Year songs. Around midnight the young men and boys would go to all the houses of their village to sing in the new year. The householders would give them gifts and then everyone went to join in the village New Year's dance at the village inn.

On New Year's Day the people greeted each other with good-luck wishes that went something like, "May you have good luck next year, may your stalls be full of cattle, your barn full of grain, and your purse full of gold."

On Three Kings Day the head of the household will write over all of the doors of the house with a piece of consecrated chalk. They wrote formula for the names of the three kings, "K+M+B" (Kaspar, Melchior, Balthazar), to protect the house from misfortune. On that same day the children would wander from house to house singing the song of the Three Kings, "Wir kommen daher in grosser Eil."

Based on an extract from the Egerland Yearbook, 1995.

## You Are Never Too Young ... Or Old To Learn About Your Family

By Cathryn Kastanek

It is gratifying to know that some of the younger generation sees the importance of introducing their children to grandparents, great grandparents, aunts and uncles. In today's mobile society, with great distances and busy lifestyle, the gifts the older generation can offer to us are often lost in the shuffle. In times past an aged relative often lived in the home with one of their children. There were few nursing homes or other alternative or affordable options. Although what the elderly person could offer to the family was not always appreciated, there was the opportunity to hear the stories of their past, their struggles and their victories. Is there a genealogist who hasn't said "I wish I had been more attentive when Mom or Dad, Grandma or Grandpa told me their stories"? Our elder relatives gave us clues that could have saved us days and weeks of research once we were bitten by the Genealogy Bug.

My friend Shelly, was determined to provide that opportunity to her two young daughters. Shelly remembered fondly the times she sat as a child and listened to her grandmother tell stories about growing up in Central Minnesota, and Shelly treasured the times she rode beside her grandpa as he drove his prized horses on the Christmas sleigh rides he hosted. Those memories and stories were experiences her daughters were missing, and Shelly was bound and determined to bring them to her girls!

Shelly decided that a good place to start would be with a woman she had never met. They would visit her



husband's grandmother. Tim and Shelly are farmers in the Red River Valley and in the years they had been married, Tim never "had the time" to visit relatives. Tim balked at the idea. Not only would his busy schedule be disrupted, but Shelly insisted he had to "dress up". Shelly said it was not proper for him to visit dressed in his favorite denims and work shirt. She was proud of the handsome Frenchman she had married and wanted to show him off. She hoped this was going to be one of those rare occasions when he actually gave in to her wishes.

The last time Tim had seen his grandmother was before he was married. His grandfather had passed away and they were moving his grandmother into a nursing home. Now, according to other relatives, she was very ill, bedridden, and would probably die soon. Tim agreed to the visit. Shelly prepared her daughters for the trip, telling them what to expect and how to act. Shelly was going to develop a relationship between this unknown woman and her daughters if it was the last thing she would do!

They arrived at the Nursing Home, stopped at the desk to announce their intention to visit Grandma and were waved down the hall by the nurse. Tim remembered the room they had moved grandma into and lead his family directly to it. They entered the room to find "Grandma" sitting in a chair beside her bed. She seemed alert. Tim was puzzled by her change in appearance, and Shelly remarked to Tim that she must have recovered enough to be in a chair. Together they decided that her illness had probably brought on the change. After all, the relatives had just told them that Grandma was on her deathbed, so they were excited that she was doing much better.

As they visited, "Grandma" couldn't remember the grandson who was standing in her room, but she said she was glad to meet him, and that she seems to be forgetting more every day. She was elated to know she had two great-granddaughters, and happy that Tim had found a wife who found family to be important enough to visit an old lady like her. Shelly felt the visit went smoothly except that "Grandma" kept insisting that she couldn't remember the grandson who now sat holding her hand.

When they returned home, Tim and Shelly reported the good news to relatives. Grandma was doing much better. Aside from being a bit confused, she had good color, was sitting up, and chatted endlessly for the entire visit. Tim told his mother that he actually enjoyed visiting Grandma, and that he planned to go again next week with Shelly and the girls.

A few days later, Tim and Shelly were notified that Tim's grandmother had passed away. Shelly was thankful that they had visited and that her children had met their great-grandmother and had the opportunity to speak with her. Even Tim admitted that Shelly's idea to visit Grandma, had been a good idea.

On the evening of the Wake, Tim and Shelly approached the coffin. They looked at each other in disbelief! This was not the woman they had visited at the Nursing Home a few days ago! THIS was Tim's Grandmother! They had made an assumption which they knew their relatives were not going to let them live down anytime soon! Matters became worse when their youngest daughter stated loudly in the funeral home "Mom, that's NOT the Grandma you MADE us see last week!" Shelly and Tim quickly realized that they had introduced their children to someone else's grandmother.

Today Shelly tells this story with fits of giggles. She tells how they had taken for granted that grandma would still be in the same room she had when she first moved to the Nursing Home. Asking the woman her name had never occurred to either of them. Not paying attention to the woman's insistence that she didn't remember Tim is now a regret. However, Shelly feels much was gained from this experience. Her daughters met a grandmother who left a good impression on their young minds, Shelly learned a few important do's and do not's in collecting family history and now her daughters have a memorable story they can pass on to their descendants.

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## Addresses

German-Bohemian Heritage Society  
P.O. Box 822, New Ulm, MN 56073-0822

### E-Mail

Society & Newsletter:  
**[lal@mnich.net](mailto:lal@mnich.net)**

Research Information:

**[rpaulgb@pioneerplanet.infi.net](mailto:rpaulgb@pioneerplanet.infi.net)**

GBHS Home Page On The World Wide Web:

**<http://www.rootsweb.com/~gbhs/>**

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# Memorials

## In Memory of . . .

**Bradley Martinka**  
from Mariann Tremml  
from The Martinka Family

**Rose Tauscheck**  
from Jo & Carroll Elijah, Paul & Janice Kretsch  
Bill & Dianne Embacher

**Irene Lambrecht**  
Leo & Carol Beranek

**Lydia Meidl**  
from Eleanor Kretsch  
Donna Portner / Rob. Nevitt family

**Leander Stadick**  
from Paul & Janice Kretsch, Eleanor Kretsch

**Richard Wilfahrt**  
from Mariann Tremml,  
Bill & Dianne Embacher, Gladys Ries  
Paul & Janice Kretsch  
Randy & Monica Wenninger  
Carroll & Jo Elijah  
Mr. & Mrs Dale Krueger  
Florence Arbes, Kurt & Ella Eisen

**Jerry Hoffman**  
from Pat. & Nicole Eckstein

**Marie Bianchi**  
from Pat. & Nicole Eckstein

**Butch Carstensen**  
from David Zenk

## **Synopsis of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society Board of Directors Meeting September 19, 1998**

The meeting was called to order in the basement of the South New Ulm Office Building, by President Paul Kretsch.

Members present: Paul Kretsch, Angie Portner, Pat Kretsch, Gerald Gulden, Charlotte Kastanek, Robert Paulson, Louie Lindmeyer, Mariann Treml, Peggy Tauer and Adeline Wilfahrt. Members absent: Don Brand and Don Zwach.

Minutes and financial reports were read and approved.

Paul Kretsch shared information from Mr. Engeldinger regarding the scholarship program. A \$350.00 scholarship was awarded to Matthew Hilledrung to use at a college of his choice. The question was raised by Louie Lindmeyer regarding the guidelines of scholarship fund dispersal. The scholarship committee will meet to revisit the issue.

Louie Lindmeyer suggested that the Board select an individual to oversee all committees. It was decided that one of the Vice Presidential responsibilities be to serve as chairperson over all existing committees. The duties are to include contacting committee chairpersons, discussing the progress of the committees and serving as liaison to the Board.

Bob Paulson reported on the Folktales book. The book is coming to a final stage. Bob presented costs of various publishers/printers and provided samples of assorted bound books. He recommended "ota-binding" for this particular book. The Board will determine the sale price of the book in November, after more information is received. GBHS will order 400 books from Book Express.

Jerry Gulden reported that the Cookbook project is slowly progressing. Cathryn and Charlotte Kastanek are proofing recipes. Jerry and Angie are researching printers.

Louie Lindmeyer expressed a concern with losing members in January due to nonpayment of dues. He suggested the possible reason being the busy Holiday Season. He suggested moving the payment date of dues to Spring and to develop a membership drive to bring in new membership. After discussion it was decided to send a dues statement to all members in November whose dues expire December 31, 1998. In the past only a notice was posted in the newsletter.

The program for the General Meeting was developed. William E. Wright will give a presentation on peasant life in 17th and 18th century Bohemia. Charlotte will set up the photo table. She will say a few words to encourage members to participate in the photo identification project. Jerry Gulden will report on the progress of the cookbook. Bob will report on the Folktales project. Pat Kretsch will report on the Picnic, Spring Dance and other GBHS social events. Business to conduct at the meeting is the election of Board Members.

Four names will be added to the monument. Wally Bloedel will add the names, as well as clean the debris that is currently on the monument. Names to be added are: Grosam, Bregel, Herschmann and Kopetzki.

Next years Picnic has been set for August 14, 1999 at Shelter #2 at Herman Heights.

Computer: Louie informed the Board that the hard drive has crashed again. Options available are to repair the old hard drive or purchase a new computer. Discussion of the need for a computer for the office/library followed. It was decided that GBHS repair the old computer and allocate it with it's printer to the GBHS office/library. In addition a new computer and printer will be purchased for society business use.

The board reviewed the lease agreement between Deny Warta and the German Bohemian Heritage Society. General meetings will continue to be held at the New Ulm Public Library. All board meetings will be held at the GBHS library/office. Discussion on furnishing the library with books, family histories and furniture followed. GBHS will purchase bookshelves, stackable chairs, tables, a file cabinet, 1 telephone, 1 telephone installation and 1 internet link. Proper signage will be placed for the Office/Library as well.

## Rootsweb Mail

*Taken from the GBHS Rootsweb Electronic Mailing List.*

If anyone is doing research for records in Manitowoc county, Wisconsin there is a great deal of information at:

**<http://www.rootsweb.com/~wimanito/manitowoc.html>**

I am also searching that county and you can email me at : [Poretti@aol.com](mailto:Poretti@aol.com)

## Means of Transportation

Before there were railroads in Bohemia the Post wagons were almost the only public transportation. They were quite fast and carried a lot of passengers along with the mail. But they were pretty expensive and not very many peasants could afford them.

Most poorer folk traveled on foot, hitching a ride here and there with a transport wagon or a farmer going to market. The rule was that an able adult could walk about 4-5 English miles an hour but one encumbered with children probably could not travel that fast. It is hard to imagine a family making more than 35 miles per day. Those who had a cart or wagon for their possessions with a draft animal could only go the speed of the animal or the adults who were walking alongside because everyone could not ride.

Few farmers had draft horses -- most used oxen for plowing and pulling wagons if they could afford them. Some villages shared "common" draft animals. The farmers who had to provide draft animals for robot would show up with a cow to pull a plow.

Emigrants may have used a cow to pull their travel wagon because it also gave milk along the way and sometimes another

would be tethered behind to relieve the one doing the pulling and to sell to raise money along the way or once they were in port. In the port city they would sell everything they did not need to pay for their lodging until the boat departed. Those who did not already have a berth on a ship sometimes had to wait a long time and by the time they finally sailed they were almost penniless and had sold a lot of their personal effects. They were easy prey for captains who would let them aboard against a contract for their "service" for up to three years once they arrived in the US. Then he would sell their service to worker-hungry US employers for a lot more than the passage would have cost. But it was not always a bad situation...for many it was OK to have someone hire them and give them room and board while they were learning enough English to survive and learning to get along. Some were able to save some money, too, depending on the nature of their service contracts.

Back in 1816-17 most Germans and Bohemians left from Dutch ports and there were only about 20,000 berths for passengers in a given year. During the famine that persisted until 1818 almost 50,000 peasants from various parts of Germany, Switzerland, Bohemia, etc., converged on Holland, most of them on foot pushing hand carts, and lost everything they owned while waiting for a berth. The Dutch police finally stopped letting anyone cross the border who could not prove they already had a confirmed ship's reservation and ticket. All those who failed to get a ship had to return to their home villages as paupers -- many were little more than walking skeletons wrapped in rags when they returned and many lost family members to disease and starvation along the way.

But back to getting to port in 1855....there were some railroads but not very many and most connected the main capital cities back then. It was not until the 1860s that Bohemia began to have what could be called a decent railway network. Once the trains made connections to more rural areas travel to and from the big cities became so cheap that peasants were suddenly able to afford to go places they had only dreamed about before.

It is difficult for us to imagine setting out on foot to go from the Adlgerbirge to Hamburg but for people who were used to measuring distance by the time it took to walk from point to point (i.e., Mies was 7 1/2 hours from Pilsen) such a trek was something they literally "took in stride." They often walked as long as an hour to go to church on Sundays -- usually bare footed and when they got to church they would put on their shoes. They made the walk a social event, visiting and gossiping with others on the road.

Going to Hamburg may not have been very social...unless there was a cluster migration of several families who were well organized and pooled their resources to carry baggage and passengers more efficiently. (Most of the people who went to South America were in larger groups.) The inns along the way were usually well-spaced so that weary foot-sore travelers would find lodging and food (if they could afford it) at just the right time. Some folks would knock on a farmer's door to ask for shelter and might get to sleep on clean straw in the barn if they could not afford the inn. Farmers usually welcomed travelers from outside their home neighborhood because those people often carried news of what was going on elsewhere -- sometimes they even brought letters and news from relatives living far from home.

Hospitality was an understood social rule -- people did not have to be very shy about knocking on a door and asking for shelter from strangers.

The promoters who enticed people to South America were sometimes pretty unscrupulous and the people they recruited were cheated...none of the help they were promised on the other side ever materialized. In one case a group of Bohemians lost so many because of sickness while crossing and then found no assistance on the other side so the survivors decided to return to Bohemia. Only six people made it back out of more than 40 who departed.

There may have been clipper ships still sailing in 1855 -- they were eventually replaced by steam-assisted then full steam ships. You can learn a lot about the ships that brought immigrants to the Americas in "Merchant Sail" a multivolume set of fairly large books that should be available in most larger libraries. There are descriptions of the ships, lists of their embarkations, notes from captain's and other journals describing a crossing or two and even stories of disasters and how passengers were rescued from sinking ships run aground on rocky reefs.

Karen Hobbs

## **Re: Means of Transportation**

I can identify with the sentiments expressed above. I am an immigrant myself who came here as a twenty year-old and who, in the first years anyway, suffered through a severe culture shock even though I had a smattering of basic school English to help me out. But let me say this, twenty horses could not have held me back home then, the excitement, the anticipation of adventure and the ocean trip I was about to undertake were powerful motivators that drove me and I suspect many other

naive romantics to embark on a voyage into the unknown. As many European youngsters, we were brought up on a literary diet of Karl May and Jules Vernes, so we had our own vision of what to expect in the land of "Unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten" the land of endless possibilities. The central Europeans were and still are passionate travelers. You need only to riffle through European travel brochures to see the variety of possibilities. While we think of Florida and Disney they think of taking their kids to Nepal, they have already been to Disney several times. Back then, of course, people were lured by Government agents promising much land and work for everybody. Of course no one told them the down-side of the story; the backbreaking work, the hardships, death, the cold winters and the sub-tropical summers with billions of blackflies and mosquitoes and serpents. Some people came and worked the fields and cleared the brush in Opera Gloves. For many the tragedy and disappointment was complete, not having enough money for the return fare and not having the courage to go home and face the ridicule of an intolerant society. So they stayed.

Would I do it again today, frankly, I don't know, but I fear my answer would not be favorable.

Frank Soral

## Czech Info Center

Many of us who do research on our German-Bohemian ancestry sometimes find it necessary to delve into Czech research information. There are several Czech web sites on the internet but most of them are written in Czech and therefore difficult to navigate. If this has been the case for you check out [www.mislike.com/Czech/frame.html](http://www.mislike.com/Czech/frame.html). This is a great site that not only offers research help but also has categories on history, travel, recipes and meals, books, maps, weather, and shopping. You can also translate English to Czech or Czech to English and download Czech fonts

## Christmas Eve in the Homeland

Otto Werner. Egerland Yearbook 1995  
Translated and edited by Karen Hobbs

The day begins very early with the last Holy Mass of Advent. A little later all of the women are again busy with cleaning because everything must be spic and span for Christmas. All of the laundry must be done because it will not be done again all during the twelve days of Christmas. To do laundry before the Twelfth Night would surely bring bad luck.

Christmas stollen are certainly already baked and there may be six or eight of them, maybe even as many as ten. The last one will be cut on Candlemass Day (Maria Lichtmess).

Christmas Eve is a day of fasting until the evening so lunch is very simple.

Afternoon passes in preparation for the festival. The men empty the stalls and sheds and clean them thoroughly. They prepare the fuel for the holidays, straighten up the harnesses and make a virtual "Geigenbogen" (violin-music stage) out of their workshops. The clanging hammers of blacksmiths fall silent.

The children ask, "Is it very long until Christmas Eve?"

There is no time for skiing or tobogganing today. When twilight begins in the forest it is time to feed the livestock. Today the animals will have an especially generous portion of hay and their feed will also be better quality than normal so that they, too, will have a beautiful Christmas. House pets also find special treats in their food. It is common in many places to sprinkle each animal with salt -- "Kaln Braout" -- so that they will be able to talk when it is midnight. An armful of hay for the Christchild's horse is left in a corner of the barn.

Businesses remain closed and the streets and lanes are quite empty as the people concentrate on the Holy Night ahead. Only the wind is moving around the houses and whispers past the doorways. It brings snow and drops it anew on courtyard gates and houses and puts a fresh cover on the trodden-down lanes. It is especially deep on the heights.

The children think, "Will the Christ Child find the way to our house? Oh, I hope so!"

They worry because the houses are scattered fairly far apart and they always see the the possibility that a given house would be missed.

The creche is already set up in the main room of the house. A properly oriental landscape on a wooden base as large as two meters by one meter made with moss and papiermache houses. Shepherds watch over their sheep in a mossy field. At the very front and a little to one side is the "Jusukinla" (baby Jesus).

The children wonder, "Which way will the Christ Child come? Down the street or on the forest path?"

It is time to serve the Christmas Eve meal. It usually starts out with a milk or beer soup. It lasts a long time. During mealtime on the Holy Eve one cannot receive visitors because that would bring bad luck. And there must never be thirteen people at the table.

The children see a light outside from the window. "Is that the Christ Child?" they ask. The Christmas Tree will be tended to right up to the time to go to Holy Mass. Ancient folktales are told if there is a little time left -- tales of Wodan and his wife, Freia, who visit the people during Christmas time. Eyes do not become heavy with sleep until very late. The bigger children who are allowed to go to Holy Mass watch the clock in anticipation. "Is it time to go, yet?" they ask over and over again.

Shortly after 11:00 o'clock those whose houses and farmsteads are farthest from the church have to be ready to leave for Holy Mass. Dark figures appear in the snowy landscape, easy to see in the moonlight even if they have no lantern to light their way. Very soon there is a sea of lanterns moving toward the church from all directions. There will always be more people than the church can hold.

The two large Christmas Trees at the church are brightly lit. The manger, which took a group of men a full day to set up, is the size of a room. The organist's hands are stiff with cold and he rubs them vigorously before he begins to play. The priest and other ministers step from the sacristy into the brightly-lit inner sanctum. The high point of Christmas has arrived, especially for the children who are old enough to experience the special magic of this peaceful and holy night at midnight mass. The magic reaches its peak when the choir begins to sing "Stille Nacht." On the way home the cold air only serves to lift the veil of sleepiness from the children's eyes.

The children think, "Has the Christ Child been here already?"

Once they are at home everyone looks for leftover tidbits to eat that might be left in the kitchen. It is usually well worth the effort.

Very early in the morning there are gifts for the children under the Christmas Tree -- ample proof that the Christ Child found the house.

That is how it was at Christmas time back in the homeland fifty years ago. Back then many people said that Egerland was truly a Christmas land.

## Newsletter Deadline

The next issue of *The Heimatbrief* will be published in March. Deadline for submissions is February 1, 1999. Thank you.

## The Christmas Markets of Egerland

By Karen Hobbs.

*Based on translation of "Von Schneeflocken, Holzdockerln, und Paradiesv geln," As told by Margareta Pschorn and published in: Wie es Fru"her war im Egerland."*

Whenever Christmas draws near and twilight steals into a warm, cozy room, I again hear a voice from my childhood, the voice of the blessed weaver, Herr Mahm, telling of his own childhood long ago and about the long past Christmas markets of Egerland.

"Ja," he said, "back then the shopkeepers suddenly rumbled into town with their horses and wagons. They had to pay attention, no matter how well they knew the way, when they approached our houses with their corniced gables. They had to take care to always move along just right so as not to take along the corner of a house.

Every year the moment the shop wagons appeared excited children gathered in anticipation. They knew the exact day and hour that the Christmas market would begin. The girls didn't go along with the boys until later after the heavy work was done. The boys would always offer to help the shopkeepers unload. The moment a driver set a chest into the snow the boys gathered near, offering enthusiastic help. Every one of them was secretly hoping to find something broken on the bottom of the chest -- a little cart, a wooden horse that could be put back together at home for a Christmas gift that one might not otherwise have. Times back then were hard and many had only meager means.

Sometimes a brave lad would even hold the horses while others ran to the bakery for hot coffee because the shopkeepers had traveled far in the cold.

Next it was time to set up the booths and the girls would join the helpers. For some of us that was far more interesting that seeing everything organized in tiers on the counters later on because we could pick up all sorts of tantalizing objects and hold them in our hands. We were able to handle such precious items as necklaces and little rings and perhaps even a rosary. The girls always preferred the colorful little boxes and chests. Every year we asked where they came from and every year the shopkeeper said they came from Reichenberg. I always thought, "Oh! If only it were possible to own such a little chest!"

The boys went after the wooden toys, for example a bright red squirrel with a tail made of feathers that danced with every little breeze. The squirrels climbed straight up a stick with the push of a button. They could be made to climb the stick over and over again. Sometimes the boys would become so engrossed with the mechanical toys that the shopkeepers had to shout at them to remind them there was work to be done.

Assembling the rocking horses with their painted bridles came next. It always took a little while before the clumsy sections were ready to stand up on curved wooden rockers. Other smaller horses furnished with colorful harnesses also came out into the light and, finally, the least expensive appeared: unpainted horses with tails made of blotting paper.

The boys clambered around walls of the booths like monkeys, quickly hanging up guns that could shoot corks. Everyone would wait in anticipation for the moment when the shopkeeper would open another chest. He would pass his mitten under his nose because of the cold and he would call out what would be put in place next. Now colorfully painted farmer's weights came from the cartons along with wooden dolls. These little "Kindlein" (dolls) were easy to care for back then, they didn't make work. They didn't have to be bathed nor washed. In fact, washing them was not allowed -- especially not in mother's laundry tub on laundry days. Yes, then poor mother would have been unpleasantly surprised by all the pretty colors that would have ended up all over her laundry.

Little doll sized kitchen arrangements were never missing from the Christkindl collections, nor were the metal lyre boxes or the birds of paradise that had little whistles in their long tails.

Finally Sunday arrived and people came from all of the surrounding villages, crowding in friendly groups that filled the narrow streets lined with booths. Some fathers would carry their bundles of "Christkindl" purchases over their heads because they worried more about the danger to the delicate wooden objects than to their own ribs. It was rare to find an empty little street where one could easily make way.

Snowflakes fell on this magic scene and settled like thick cotton wool on roofs, ledges, garden fences, old fountains and pumps. Bargaining and trading went on all day with a constant hustle and bustle in the market. The atmosphere was full of delight and expectation and the magic music of Christmas spirit filled the air in an almost unperceptible "Halleluja."

When evening came all the shopkeepers set out wooden lanterns with candles in them and then the city looked very much like something out of an ancient fairy tale. Time to close up came very late. The shopkeepers pulled down booth covers and nailed them shut with a rumble of hammering up and down the streets. Then the thoroughly chilled merchants made their ways to the overnight accommodations they had arranged in advance. A lot of the hosts had a steaming footbath with salt in the water ready for their Christkindl shopkeeper guests. There would also be hot lemon juice to prevent the flu and sore throat and maybe even a savory grog. Back then the Lord God put many good folk under the roofs of Egerland.

Before the children crawled into their featherbeds that their mothers had warmed with a heated brick, they would look out at the market down below for a little while. Every year the same shopkeeper was the last to pack up. He simply could not seem to finish organizing himself. The remaining toys hanging there in the dim light cast long shadows over the now-empty market. The soft flaky fluff that continued to fall hid the last traces of the countless footprints that went in all directions. How the snow glittered like little stars!

Every evening around Christmas time the sandman scattered sleep into the eyes of the children with extra care as those enchanting days kept them in suspense. As night fell it might be hard to believe that this sleepy little town was so full of activity a few hours before. Now only the moon made its rounds as if looking to see that everything was in order. Its light fell into bedroom windows bringing with it dreams of the "Christkind." Yes, the Christ Child smiled joyfully down upon the little towns of Egerland and on their wonderful Christkindl Markets.

## **Wanted: Family Histories, Volunteers**

As reported in the September 1998 issue of *The Heimatbrief* the GBHS has rented a facility for use as a research library. The library is now in the process of being set up with bookshelves, files, tables, chairs, computer equipment, and of course research materials.

The society is making a request to its members to send us your family histories (including photos), family group charts, family trees or any other type of written genealogy of German-Bohemian and related families. The society will also accept books and other printed material that it feels would be of help to persons doing research in the library.

We are also looking for volunteers to help man our research library. Times and hours are very flexible.

If you have something you would like to donate please send it to:

**GBHS  
Library Donation  
P.O. Box 822  
New Ulm, MN 56073-0822**

If you have a larger amount of materials that you feel would be difficult or expensive to mail, or if you would like to volunteer your time for the GBHS Research Library please call:

**Louis Lindmeyer  
507-354-4831**

**lal@mnic.net**

# History For Sale

## **German-Bohemians - The Quiet Immigrants**

by La Vern Rippley & Robert Paulson

**A must have book for researchers** . Over ten years in the making. Fully researched. Nine chapters describing our German-Bohemian ancestors life in the homeland, the journey to America and life in their new-found homes. Customs, traditions, music, heritage and more. Over 150 photographs.

Hard cover, 279 pages. . . . . \$25.90

## **Border People: The B hmische (German-Bohemians) in America**

by Ken Meter and Robert Paulson

**Highly recommended**, fully researched. Includes many counties in Wisconsin. Soft cover, 32 pages, many photographs. . . . . \$11.50

## **Duetsch-B hmische K che**

**A German-Bohemian Cookbook.** Dozens of authentic German and German-Bohemian recipes. Ring bound, soft cover, 88 pages of recipes. . . . . \$9.00

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

by LaVern J. Rippley. . . . . \$6.00

**German-Bohemian Immigrant Monument Book** - A souvenir booklet of the monument dedication by the GBHS. . . . . \$5.00

# **Music**

**German-Bohemian Heritage Singers, Preserving the Heritage** cassette tape. A wonderful array of German and German-Bohemian dialect songs . . . . . \$9.00

**Preserving the Heritage II** cassette tape. An encore performance features even more toe tapping and heart warming songs in the German and German-Bohemian flavor. Add it to your collection today. . \$10.00

All prices (U.S. Funds Only Please) include sales tax and postage . If you wish to order any of these items, send a check payable to GBHS and mail it with your request to: GBHS, P.O. Box 822, New Ulm, MN, 56073-0822

## **GBHS Officers and Board Members**

### **1998 Officers**

#### **President**

Paul Kretsch  
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New Ulm, Minnesota 56073-1519  
Telephone: (507) 354-2763

#### **Vice President**

Gerald Gulden

#### **Treasurer**

George Portner

#### **Secretary**

Charlotte Kastanek-Hoppe

## **GBHS Board of Directors**

### **Board Member Emeritus**

LaVern J. Rippley

### **Social Activities**

Don Brand

### **Social Activities Chair**

Pat Kretsch

### **Newsletter Editor, Library Chair, Research, Membership**

Louis Lindmeyer

### **Research Chair, Internet Chair, Program Chair, Education, Library**

Robert Paulson

### **Sales Chair, Membership Chair, Treasurer Asst.**

Angeline Portner

### **Publicity Chair**

Peggy Tauer

### **Hospitality Chair, Social Activities**

Adeline Wilfahrt

### **Education Chair**

Don Zwach

Patrick Eckstein

## **Eckstein Elected to Board**

Patrick Eckstein, long time member of the GBHS, was elected to the GBHS Board of Directors at the October 24th fall general meeting. Eckstein replaced long time board member Mariann Treml who decided not to seek reelection. Pat and his wife Nicole live in Madison Lake, Minnesota.

Reelected to the board of directors were Charlotte Kastanek, Jerry Gulden, George Portner, and Peggy Tauer.

## **The German-Bohemian Village of Schwanenbrckl**

(according to Johann Micko)

Schwanenbrckl is located six kilometers from Muttersdorf and nestled in the valley where the Radbusa has its source. Schwanenbrckl is thought to surely owe its place-name to the noble von Schwanenberg family [Lords of Swan mountain]. Its roots also lie in the establishment of a glassworks.

Originally it belonged to the von Schwanenbergs who were then occupants/owners of the Gut [farming estate] of Pfraumberg. The wooden bridge with the coat of arms bearing a swan was the boundary of their estate. Kaiser Rudolf II sold it [Schwanenbrckl] in 1596 to a master glassmaker from northern Bohemia, Paul Scherer, who

built a glassworks there. In 1609 this new glassworks was known as "Neue Hütte" in the local dialect to differentiate it from the already longstanding older glassworks "Alte Hütte." At that time all the property and buildings were purchased by the von Wiederspergs of Muttersdorf. As a consequence Schwanenbrckl became the seat of its own manor which included the villages of Pfaffenberg, Grossgorschin, Kleingorschin and Putzbühl. Alte Hütte, Johanneshütte, Friedrichshof, Schnaggenmühle, Franzbrunnhütte, Schwarzach, Oberhütte and Unterhütte also were linked to Schwanenbrckl.

In 1789 Schwanenbrckl had 30 house numbers with two glassworks. In 1839 there were already 25 houses with 195 inhabitants, the glassworks, a distillery, a potash works, a forest ranger's house, a Meierhof [large farm operated for the noble lord] with an old manor house, two mills and a sawmill [plank saw]. In 1913 Schwanenbrckl was one of the places known for a nice cool climate in summertime and there were then 36 houses with 205 inhabitants. In 1945 there were 52 houses there.

In 1939 the total population of Schwanebrckle was 711 people which included Johanneshütte's eight houses and the 60 houses of Alte Hütte with their 450 inhabitants. In

1937 the total landholding of the community was 477 hectares. In 1797 the schoolhouse in Schwanebr ckl finally was expanded to two rooms [became "zwei-klassig"]. After the children of Neub u who had been going to school in Schwanebr ckl got their own schoolhouse and after an "Expositur" [branch] school was built in Alth tten, the children of Johannesh tte, Kleingorschin and of the hamlets Platten and Engelhaus continued to come to school in Schwanebr ckl.

Schwanebr ckl had the church in Muttersdorf for its parish. The last B rgermeister of Muttersdorf was Johann Richter, under whose administration the place became a very popular destination for its cool summers as long as the events of the Second World War did not interfere with visits to the place. Four men of the 33 who served in the First War failed to return home. Eighteen men of Schwanebr ckl fell as casualties of the Second World War.

Inhabitants of Schwanebr ckl in 1939 and their respective house numbers are as follows.

House No. Family Name

- 3 Karl Schwab
- 4 Lorenz Hogen
- 5 Johann Biebl
- 6 Josef Siegl
- 7 Josef Lang
- 8 Johann Richter
- 9 Josef Piehl
- 11 Georg Maier
- 12 Johann Nachtmann
- 13 Richard Gaag
- 14 Heinrich Hajek (Kaufmann)

- 15 Josef Zupfer
- 16 Anton Sp r l
- 17 Josef Biebl
- 19 Josef Governatz
- 20 Franz Helget
- 21 Josef St r l
- 22 Anton Siegl
- 23 Josef Governatz
- 24 Heinrich Betzold
- 25 Josef Sp r l
- 26 Franz Sellner
- 27 Franz Richter
- 28 Franz Lang (Straßenw rter)
- 29 Malbeck Marie
- 30 Georg Kunz
- 31 Karl Braun
- 32 Anton Weiß
- 33 Franz Richter
- 35 Josef Siegl
- 36 Heinrich Sp r l
- 37 Johann Lang
- 38 Franz Biebl
- 39 Josef Tauer
- 40 Josef Richter
- 41 Johann Czada
- 42 Georg Rothmeier
- 43 Johann Zeug
- 44 Wenzel Hogen
- 45 Franz Biebl
- 46 Ludwig Richter
- 47 Josef Lang
- 48 Karl Schmidt
- 49 Wenzel H ring
- 50 Georg Holl
- 51 Josef Sellner

## **Synopsis of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society General Meeting held on October 24, 1998**

Bob Paulson reported on the progress of the Folktales book, which is may be available before Christmas, 1998. The current GBHS research projects are articles and presentations on the Anton Gag family, the missionary work of George Kiefner, and German-Bohemian immigrants of the New Ulm area.

Jerry Gulden extended recognition and appreciation to those in the organization who have contributed their time and energy. He informed members that they will be receiving a postcard shortly and hoped they may be able to fill in the information to aid membership recruitment. Jerry concluded with an update on the progress of the cookbook project.

Charlotte Kastanek extended the Welcome to visitors, and invited members to participate in the photo identification project. A table will be set up at each General Meeting where people may display their unidentified photos, for members to peruse and help one another exchange information. Future GBHS newsletters will feature unidentified photos.

Pat Kretsch informed membership of the type of work that goes into maintaining the GBHS Singers, and the various engagements the group has been performing at. He reminded members of the upcoming social events GBHS is sponsoring and invited them to bring family and friends. Adeline Wilfahrt thanked Heritage Fest volunteers for their help and willingness to make themselves available.

Election of Board Members followed. The 1999 Board of Directors are Pat Eckstein, Charlotte Kastanek, Jerry Gulden, Peggy Tauer, George Portner, Angie Portner, Paul Kretsch, Pat Kretsch, Adeline Wilfahrt, Louie Lindmeyer, Don Zwach, Dan Brand and Bob Paulson.

The highlight of the meeting was the presentation by Professor William E. Wright entitled "They Measured Up, Bohemian Peasant in the 17th and 18th Century".

The General Meeting closed with a tour of the German Bohemian Heritage Society Research Center at 1200 South Broadway, New Ulm, Minnesota.

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**Family Membership \$10.00 per Year**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please list surnames you are researching including geographical locations. (Optional)**

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