

the Heimatbrie

A Newsletter Magazine of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society

Celebrating the GBHS' 17th Year

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We encourage contributions to the "Heimatbrief" in the form of articles, letters, notices, or free queries. Advertising is not accepted. Preferred formats for articles are Mac or PC word processing files with disc and hard copy, email, or typed pages. Short letters or queries may be neatly handwritten. The editor reserves the right to edit contributions for length, substance, and grammar. The German-Bohemian Heritage Society is not responsible for accuracy, errors, or omissions in articles submitted by others. Send contributions to Louis Lindmeyer, GBHS, P.O. Box 822, New Ulm, MN, 56073-0822. Or email to lal@newulmtel.net. This newsletter was created using a Macintosh G3 computer.

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who played with the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers for several years.

The following musicians gave up their time and talents providing wonderful listening and dancing music: Johnny Helget, LeRoy Flor, Tom Franta, Rich Griebel, Glenn Kerkhoff, Hilly Mohr, Dain Moldan, Fred Moldan, Lisa Moldan, Benny Seifert, Ewrin Suess, and Tom Suess. We thank them all.

Warta's name was submitted to a list of names of potential candidates which were compiled over several months by the board of directors. The board then voted with Warta coming out on top. The selection was kept mostly a secret until the actual crowning on that very snowing day that was attended by more than 150 delighted guests.

King Warta gave a very heartfelt acceptance speech followed by his first official appointments as follows:

Prince Regent: Paul "Wenzel" Kretsch; Secretary of Defense: Arminius "Wenzel" Hermann; Secretary of the Treasury: George "Wenzel" Portner; Secretary of the Interior: Norman "Wenzel" Warta; Attorney General: William "Wenzel" O'Connor; Surgeon General: Dr. Daniel "Wenzel" Groebner; Minister of Propaganda: Louis "Wenzel" Lindmeyer; Radio Communications: Marlene "Wenzelova" Domeier; Graphics & Photography: Flip "Wenzel" Schulke; Historian: Darla "Wenzelova" Gebhard.

In addition king Warta announced the following Ambassadorships: To the city of New Ulm: Mayor Dr. Arnold "Wenzel" Koelpin; To Brown County: Peggy "Wenzelova" Tauer; To Wallachei: Dan "Wenzel" Beranek; To Goosetown: Mary Ellen "Wenzelova" Domeier; To Silk Stocking Ward: Dr. Jim "Wenzel" Seifert; To St. Paul: Robert "Wenzel" Paulson; To New Mexico: George "Wenzel" Glotzbach; Ambassador-At-Large: Dr. Don Heinrich "Wenzel" Tolzmann.

I asked king Warta (also known as Denny the VIII) to write a bio of himself as well as some ancestral history of his family so our members who live outside the New Ulm area may better know him and why he was chosen as the new GBHS Bohemian King. The following is his reply:

New GBHS Bohemian King Denis J. Warta. Photo by Dan Iverson, New Ulm Journal.

Warta Crowned Böhmer Koenig

uring a very regal ceremony fit for a king Denis J. Warta as crowned the German-Bohemian Heritage Societies Bohemian King" during the societies spring dance on April 1, 2002. The dance music, orchestrated by well know New Ulm area concertina player Johnny Helget, was also a tribute to a dear friend of the GBHS, David Suess who passed away April 1, 2002. David was a talented musician

I, Denis Joseph Warta, am a 3rd generation German American, three-quarter German-Bohemian and one-quarter Bavarian. My paternal Grandmother, Franciska Pongratz Pinska Warta, was born and raised on the German-Austrian Bohemian border, in Niederbayern or Lower Bavaria, near the village of Eschelkahn. She was married to Franz Pinska with whom she emigrated to Lafayette Township, Nicollet County, MN. They departed Europe with two children who died at sea. In June of 1885, a stroke of lightning changed her life forever, along with mine. Her husband, Franz, was struck and killed by a lightning bolt, in their cabin on the farmstead. She was with child when she buried her spouse at the St. George cemetery. Within a year she married my paternal

randfather, Josef Warta, Sr. He was born in Possigkau, ohemia, Austria, where his family ran a gasthaus and he nherited a flour and saw mill through marriage. All of his iblings except the eldest, Adam, migrated to the New Ulm rea. The eldest, of course, inherited all of the estate, as as the custom and law of the time. Possigkau is adjacent to emschen and these two villages now have one Czech ame, Tremlsne. The villagers went to church in Tutz, now ubec, and Weisensulz is nearby.

y maternal Grandparents migrated from an area of ohemia between Eschelkahn and Possigkau. Between hese two villages, about 15 miles distant, lie the now azed villages of Rindl and Waldersgruen. All four of my randparents were born and resided within about 15 miles n Europe. My maternal Grandfather, Joseph Hoffmann, as born in Rindl and all of his family, along with his arents, came to Sigel Town in the New Ulm area, where an lder brother, Andreas (Andrew) Hoffmann had migrated o, in 1858. My maternal Grandmother, Elizabeth Holl offmann, was born in Waldersgruen, near Schuttwa, here they went to church.

s twelve year-olds, Joseph and Elizabeth knew each ther at the church school in Stockau, where they attended lasses in a Kloster. This village is now known as Pivon and he river that flows through the village is the Pivonka. A ew years after Joseph Hoffmann began a farm in Sigel own, he had Elizabeth join him and they were married in oly Trinity Church. Elizabeth served her rural neighbors s a mid-wife for many years.

he eldest of Joseph Hoffmann's siblings, Andreas, was a rown County Commissioner, as well as a defendant in owntown New Ulm during the Indian War, was a Civil ar veteran, serving in the 2nd Minnesota Cavalry in ursuit of the Sioux in the Dakota territory in 1863 and 864. He was a staunch member of the Turnverein and was uried from Turner Hall. His grave is about one hundred eet North of the Doughboy monument in the New Ulm ity Cemetery.

nother sibling was Maria Hoffmann Portner, the randmother of the famous Whoopie John Wilfahrt. The heme song of Whoopie John is the beloved Mariechen alz and this was in honor of his Grandmother who gave im his first button accordion.

s a youngster growing up in New Ulm on North Jefferson treet I did not speak English. My mother and father, enry and Theresa Hoffmann Warta, spoke only German or erman-Bohemian dialect, as did all of my playmates in he neighborhood. I did manage to dilute my 'pure' ohemian dialect in the process because we had neighbors hose background was Bavarian or Swabish and this xplains why my dialect in now 'impure'. When I speak the ialect in the Oberpfalz in Germany, (their dialect, I am old, is the closest to the German-Bohemian dialect spoken y my grandparents), they are astonished when I begin a

conversation in the dialect. They cannot believe that I am a 3rd generation American and the linguists are confused because they find it impossible to name the place of my origin. This is, likely, because I, unknowingly, have a mixture of German dialects. When I began first grade as a five-year old in 1933 at Holy Trinity School, I could not speak English, nor could most of my classmates. We learned English rapidly and the tragedy of World War II made it very unpopular to speak German.

I am very proud of my German-Bohemian heritage and continue to study its many and varied customs. As a culture of central Europe, it was very developed in the mid 19th century and it was looked upon as a jewel in the eyes of many historians. Its beautiful landscape was not the best for agriculture and the prevailing economic conditions enabled and motivated these creative people to leave the Bohmerwald for America and, thus, enriched not only themselves, but the United States as well.

I am also very proud to be the elected King of Bohemia and will strive to spread the good word and the great work of all German-Bohemians who built the heritage of New Ulm, namely, the industry, the professionalism, the agriculture, the schools, the music, the arts, and the unique customs that make New Ulm a great place to live, love and visit. Thank you to all of you for the honor!

Denis J. Warta
aka Denny VIII

Thanks go out to the dance committee of Paul Kretsch, Pat Kretsch, Jerry Gulden, Angie Portner, and Don Brand. Thanks also to those who participated in the coronation parade led by Don Brand and to members of the former GBHS Heritage Singers for help in setup and lead vocals for "Tief drin im Böhmerwald". Thanks to George Portner for manning the sales table and to Janice Kretsch, Janet Zeigler, and Jenny Eckstein for ticket sales and Brian Kretsch for the a great job at the video camera.

Research Center Hours

New Ulm's annual Heritagefest is fast approaching and the research library committee has set additional hours that the research center will be open during Heritagefest. The additional hours will be 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 pm on July 12, 13, 19, 20.

The regular hours are the first Saturday of the month from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and the second Tuesday of the month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Other times may be available by appointment by calling Don Brand at 507-354-5688.

Yes, They Are Related

The Families of Anton and Peter Gag

By *Robert J. Paulson*

Sometimes bits of family folklore or oral tradition are very difficult to prove. This was the case with the Gag family. The numerous descendants of Peter Gag have always maintained that they were related to the artist, Anton Gag and his famous daughter Wanda.

All previously published accounts stated that Anton Gag was born in Neustadt bei Haid and that the Peter Gag family originated in Trohatsin. Both these towns were located in western Bohemia but in different counties, about 100 miles from each other. What could be the connection?

The birthplace of Joseph Gag, the son of Peter, in 1848 is documented by a copy of a Taufschein (a record of baptism) found in the Gag file in the Brown County Historical Society. The birthplace of Anton Gag was much more difficult to document. Over a period of years I had hired several researchers in Germany and Czechoslovakia to check the church records in the regional archives in Pilsen for Anton's birth, first in Neustadt bei Haid, then in any village by the name of Neustadt (which there are many), and finally for any town beginning with "Neu" located in western Bohemia. The answer was always the same, "no record can be found". I also contacted the Heimat group responsible for keeping records of expelled German-Bohemians for the Neustadt area. The reply was "the name Gag is not found in this area."

Finally, after much frustration and at the suggestion of a fellow genealogist, I began looking into the records of the siblings of Anton Gag. I looked for the marriage record for Anna Gag, sister of Anton, to Joseph Sellner. Surprisingly, attached to the marriage license was an affidavit stating that the couple had not been previously married, and that Anna had been born in "Valk" and that Joseph had been born in "Bernatitz". I quickly took out my maps and gazetteers and learned that "Valk" was actually Walk, (the W. would be pronounced like a V in German) and was a very small village of less than 12 houses located about two kilometers south of Neustadt bei Haid. It was part of the parish of Pernartitz. The reason that the name Gag was not known in the area of Neustadt was that the parish of Pernartitz was attached to the parish to the south namely, Heiligenkreuz.

Armed with his information I hired a friend of a friend in Germany to go to the Pilsen archives to look for the record of baptism of Anton in the church of Pernartitz. About six weeks later the long awaited record arrived. It stated that Anton was born on 12 June 1858 the son of George Gag a painter, that is the owner of a very small house with little

or no property attached. George was a Zimmerman by trade; we would call him a finishing carpenter or cabinetmaker. Anton was born in house No. 14 in Walk in the community of Wurken. Anton's grandfather was also a George Gag from the village of Dehenten, which is just a few kilometers southeast of Walk. Grandfather George Gag was married to Maria Bownen. Anton's mother was Theresia Heller daughter of Joseph Heller and Katarina Hamperal also of Walk.

Anton Gag

Next it was necessary to establish a connection between the families of Anton and Peter Gag. What was the link? I knew that there were many Gag families coming from the villages of the parish of Heiligenkreuz in County Bischofteinitz, just to the south of Pernartitz. The Gag name was also found in the village of Neubäu from which stems my Rebitzer family. I now hired a professional research team in the Czech Republic to look into the church records of Heiligenkreuz and the land records of the area to see if they could establish a connection and further to determine what caused the Gag family to emigrate.

After a wait of nearly a year, I received their report. I was amazed at the number of documents they found and the detailed information that these documents contained. In summary, this is what was discovered. Yes, the two families are related. It seems that the Gag family did indeed originate in Heiligenkreuz. The story begins with Andrew Gag who married Barbara Prohl in 1753. On 16 Sept. 1754, Johann Gag was born in Heiligenkreuz. He later married Margaretha Gag from Weissensulz on 9 June 1778.

our children were born to them: Katharina (1779), Maria nna(1782), George (1784), and Johann (1786). On ovember 5, 1808, the eldest son George, at the age of 24, ook over the farm for 300 gold coins and paid his brother nd sisters 79 gold coins each for their inheritance. He also ad to provide for his parents Johann and Margaretha. he son George Sr. married Maria Achteling in eiligenkreuz, and on 17 September 1817, had a son George r. This George Jr. was the father of Anton.

time 51 years old. As part of the purchase agreement George Jr. had to provide housing and other means for sustaining his parents. This arrangement did not work well for George Jr. Six years later, on 17 June 1843, he concluded a prenuptial agreement with Theresia Heller of Walk where Theresia provided her cottage #15 in Walk for the bridegroom and he gave her one hundred old gold coins in return. This was half of the proceeds from the Gag farm in Dehenten. George received a place to live and no longer had to care for his parents in Dehenten.

So George Gag came to live in Walk and married Theresia on 18 July 1843. A daughter Maragretha was born in 1845. In April 1846 the Gags bought cottage #14 in Walk, the smallest cottage with the poorest land in the village. They also had to provide for the housing of the previous owner in this small cottage. The Gags were definitely on a downward economic spiral. In 1847 a daughter Anna was born. Kaspar was born in 1849 but died a few years later. Joseph was born in 1852, and Anton in 1858. The Gag children attended school and the family attended Mass in the church in the neighboring village of Pernartitz. In 1869 Anna, at the age of 17, emigrated from Bohemia. The remainder of the family followed in year 1873. They left from the port of Bremen and arrived in Baltimore aboard the USS Ohio on 30 May 1873. After a stay in St. Paul, Anton and his family moved in New Ulm, thus bringing together the two Gag families again.

A new question is always suggested with every question that is answered. Did the Peter and Anton Gag family know that they were related? The answer is “maybe”. When Anna Gag, Anton's sister, first came to Brown County she worked on the John Seifert farm, which was located next to the Peter Gag farm in Cottonwood Township. I think this is too much of coincidence to ignore.

Peter Gag

Photo courtesy of Brown County Historical Society

he younger brother Johann, born in 1786, who was now andless, traveled about 30 miles to the village of Trohatin n Kreis Bischofteinitz. In Trohatin he met and later arried Barbara Groebner, the 26-year-old widow of ohann Groebner of Trohatin #31. Barbara Groebner's aiden name was Schroepfer. Johann Gag was 39 years old hen he got married on 6 June 1825. The following year, ay 29,1826 Peter Gag was born. Peter grew up in Trohatin nd later met Maria Lassus also of Trohatin. She was born n Sept. 1825. A son Joseph was born to Peter and Maria on 0 January 1849. The parents were later married on 29 May 849. Other children soon followed. Wenzel (1850), atharina (1852), Elizabeth (1854). The family emigrated n 1855. They were one of the first German-Bohemian amilies to immigrate to the New Ulm area.

So finally after years of frustration and a large expenditure of money for research, I can say with certainty, “yes, the families of Anton and Peter Gag are related”.

Newsletter Deadline

The next newsletter is scheduled for publication in September. Deadline for submissions is August 1, 2002.

In 1837 George Sr, the grandfather of Anton, sold the Gag armstead in Heiligenkreuz and moved a few kilometers orth to a smaller farm in the village of Dehenten. Shortly hereafter George Jr., Anton's father, returned from ilitary service as a sapper, an Army construction engineer, nd purchased the farm from his father who was at this

Effects of War, Economic Depression, and Famine 1815-1820

by Karen Hobbs
(previously published in *Rocenka*)

Peasant proverb:

Year of rain is a year of pain.

Nice dry year is one of good cheer.

Author unknown

The families I have studied emigrated between 1860 and 1875 from the area of Bohemia near the city of Strbrow - called Mies in German - on the Mies River. Most of the oldest in these families were born between 1812 and 1815. Their lives must have had difficult beginnings because that period included the end of the Napoleonic Wars and one of the worst economic depressions and famines that Europe has ever experienced. All of them were peasant farmers with one exception, a butcher from the city of Mies in Bohemia.

At the beginning of the 19th Century Eastern Europe was predominantly agricultural. Farming made up the largest component of the national income and it was the largest industry in terms of capital investment and the size of the labor force involved. The economic well-being of entire nations depended on the outcome of a harvest and the price of grain.

19th century peasants in Habsburg lands practiced subsistence farming -- which meant they were seldom able to produce any surplus after meeting their own needs and selling the crops they grew to put some necessary cash in their pockets.

19th Century land-holdings were described as parts of a whole section or "manor" with a full-, half-, quarter- or smaller than a quarter-manor used to indicate the relative size of an individual holding. There were also many peasants who had a house but no land except perhaps a small garden, and still others who did not have a house but lived in small cottages provided by the noble landlord. In Czech lands the cottagers and landless peasants outnumbered those who had land to farm. They had to depend on wages of some kind for their subsistence. They worked as weavers, field hands, household help, and as casual labor on public works or common village projects. Some were masons, tailors and apprentices to tradesmen.

Between 1815 and 1840 the distribution of peasant holdings did not change much. In Moravia 82% of households had a quarter or less, in Hungary it was 84% and in Styria, 78% of peasants were small holders. Typically these peasants owned little more than 10 hectares - about 25 acres. In

many cases even a holding this small was not in one location but broken up into several smaller parcels in scattered locations. Having scattered parcels to tend increased the time and labor the peasant had to invest in his land. When possible peasants would exchange given parcels in an effort to consolidate their holdings. All fields were generally long and narrow because plows were hard to turn and the longer the field the fewer the turns that had to be made. When a farmer was too poor to have a horse or ox, a milk cow might be used to pull a plow.

All peasants had to pay rents and taxes to noble landowners and government bureaucracies. They paid with cash and with farm produce or perhaps with handiwork like linen cloth from a cottage weaver. They were also bound to a given number of hours of work (called Robot) in the noble landlord's fields or in his household every year. The amount of product and labor owed to the landlord was fixed and had to be set aside or done before peasants could take any produce or work time for their own needs -- no matter how good a year it might be. During planting and harvest seasons in particular they had to work for the noble landlord before they were free to work in their own fields.

Crops varied with the fertility of the land. The usual crops were wheat, rye, and barley for home use or for sale, oats and potatoes as fodder for livestock and hops or wine grapes as money crops. Flax produced yarn for homespun clothing and sometimes was a money crop. Habsburg peasants raised sheep, cattle, goats and some pigs and they depended more on these herds in the areas where land was less fertile or too hilly to cultivate. Other crops included garden grown fruits and vegetables like peas and lentils. Most villages or large farmsteads had a bee hive or two and steps were taken to attract wild birds such as doves that were considered delicacies.

Each village had common woodlands for firewood and ponds for fish and eels and which also provided reservoirs for fighting fire. A common pasture was usually located on land that was otherwise unproductive and it was usual for children under the age 12 to spend their days watching the herds to be sure they did not wander into the planted fields.

Chickens, ducks, geese, goats, milk cows and pigs were raised to feed individual households rather than for profit although there was often more meat than a family could eat before it spoiled when one was slaughtered. Meat that could not be smoked in the big chimney in the kitchen found its way into the local market. Chickens laid eggs infrequently and sometimes not at all in winter. Any surplus of eggs, butter, cheese, meat or poultry might be sold to supplement income or traded for other goods and services.

Farming in Habsburg lands was based on a system called "three fields and fallow." Every year a different one third of the land was simply plowed after harvest and left unplanted for one season. This prevented weeds from

aturing and seeding the field, it helped restore fertility and retained subsoil moisture that would otherwise disperse through growing plants, and it made the land ready to plant when the time came. Although this system had helped maintain at least a marginal fertility for countless years, it also kept a growing population from using one-third of their arable land each year.

Land-holding had to be a half manor or larger before any real surplus could be raised to generate cash. Because holdings of that size were quite rare and most farms were too small to produce money crops and enough grain for their own use, most peasants were actually buyers of grain rather than sellers.

Many farmers also practiced a trade because farming alone was not sufficient to provide for the needs of a family. Cottagers had to purchase virtually all of their food except in rare cases where some might have a goat or some chickens. They might also accept produce in payment for weaving services.

The wars against Napoleon led to a blockade of Europe by the British fleet. The blockade prevented the normal flow of imported American grain and sugar, South American potatoes and manufactured goods like English machinery and cotton fabrics onto the continent. The result was a rush to farm production in order to decrease dependence on imported foodstuffs.

Until that time the very large farms owned by the Habsburg nobility had not been run as a profit-making business. For nobility to engage in business for profit was unthinkable and to use their land to make money was absolutely unacceptable in noble society. If a surplus was produced on these farms it was stored to provide something for the peasants who depended on their noble landlords to provide for them in times of need.

Because of the war blockade farming for profit was now necessary and could even be called patriotic. The old taboos against nobility making money from their land were overcome and by the end of the war farming for profit had become a completely acceptable concept among noble landlords.

During the war many nobles took interest in new ways to maximize production for the necessary surplus to meet the wartime demand. They began to seek ways to improve their herds and the herds of their peasants. Noble manors introduced crop rotation as one means to produce the surpluses needed to replace imported grain. Sugar beets became an important money crop and by 1810 sugar refineries thrived throughout Bohemia, replacing the need for imported sugar and creating a demand for beets. Continental textile factories flourished to meet the demand created by lack of competition from abroad and the demand for spinning machines kept budding manufacturers busy. NOTE: These precursors of tool-making industries were

usually large shops set up by a master craftsman who then hired journeymen as production workers.) Although there was inflation, it led to investment in new business and to elementary improvements in the distribution and transportation systems.

Continental self-sufficiency in food production was still difficult to maintain because the war created a serious shortage of manpower. Landless peasants left their villages and flocked to the new factories looking for a better wage. Conscription depopulated rural areas even more. Large numbers of young men went off for quick training before having to march into battle. They were crowded into unsanitary, airless barracks where up to 20% died of disease every year -- often without ever having seen an enemy soldier. Rural villages were left with scarcely enough labor to work the fields.

Peasants generally enjoyed better health than city dwellers but they had too little exposure to infectious diseases like Typhus and Smallpox to build up much immunity and they were chronically undernourished. This made them vulnerable to the Typhus that returning soldiers brought with the lice that typically infested their clothing. Likewise, when migrating unemployed workers carried urban epidemics beyond the cities into the countryside, terrible consequences followed. Many would die within a very short time, in particular small infants, younger children and the elderly.

Rural villages had only one advantage with which they could overcome an epidemic - their uncrowded living conditions. While Typhus and other infectious diseases could kill a victim quickly, they lost their own ability to survive and infect others unless they reached a new host. Thus epidemics in rural villages tended to be more short-lived than those in more crowded cities. Nevertheless when an epidemic ended a village might have lost more than 10% of its population, to include entire families.

The Napoleonic wars affected the population in other ways. Battles destroyed houses, farms, and factories and created streams of refugees. Marching columns of soldiers trampled fields, and moved into farmsteads and villages to demand shelter. They took over any shelter they could find, even bedding with livestock in barns and stables. Occupied villages were subject to requisitions which meant the soldiers - both friendly and hostile -- took any livestock or food stores they wanted in order to feed themselves. They confiscated horses and wagons to transport requisitioned food supplies when they finally left a location.

Peasants and Burghers alike became very clever at hiding their stores of food or anything else that soldiers might want. Underground cellars hid beneath manure piles and haystacks and smoked meats and valuables disappeared under the thatch high on a roof. Some farmers would deliberately leave a cache of food where it was certain to

e found in hopes that the soldiers would then stop looking or more. They would also drive their livestock and poultry deep into a nearby forest to hide them until the oldiers were gone.

artime taxes had already made many peasants too poor o buy more seed after passing armies took their grain so heir fields lay unsown. A Sudeten folk tale tells of wise armers who chose to sow their seed grain on top of snow-covered fields rather than let the approaching French rmy take it. The tale ends by noting that those farms njoyed good crops the following year while surrounding illages had nothing after the French took all their seed rain.

oldiers experienced at making requisitions and who also new all of the hiding places in their home villages were ery good at finding food no matter how cleverly it was oncealed. The rules for requisitions required payment for nything taken from a civilian household - by friend and oe alike - but these payments, if made, never came close to eing enough to replace what was taken.

eavy debts created by war led to high taxes throughout he Austrian Empire. One cartridge for a musket cost the ame as one whole day's field ration for one soldier. arching armies were in constant need of new weapons, agons, horses and ammunition and roads and bridges along ilitary routes needed constant repairs. The losing side ad to pay the victor huge sums in war reparations when an rmistice was signed and the Austrian army had been on he losing side of many battles with Napoleon. The huge rmies mobilized during the final campaign that ended ith the battle of Waterloo, and all of the governments hat participated felt the financial impact. When the war nded the Austrian treasury was nearly empty.

ature added to the crippling social and economic effects of 5 years of war. After a series of hot summers between 1801 nd 1809, the weather turned cold and wet. The Russian inter of 1812 that contributed to Napoleon's defeat was uch colder than normal and it was only the first of six bnormally cold winters. The mean annual temperature uring those years was only a little more than 46 degrees ahrenheit and the spring and summer seasons were colder han any during the previous 35 years. Bohemians went ndoors in the middle of summer, seeking the heat of ooking fires because it was so cool between July and eptember 1816. Because the lowest temperatures relative o what was normal occurred during the peak of the growing eason some crops failed to mature and what harvest there as came quite late. To make matters worse there was also n abnormal amount of rain through most of the growing eason into the autumn.

uring three more years the pattern of conscription, war, nd bad weather persisted. Each year more young men left heir home villages. Each year was so cold and wet that owing grain in the autumn became very difficult. Plows got

stuck and oxen had to be reshoed more than once because they kept losing their shoes in muddy fields. Much of the seed rotted and failed to sprout in the spring. Extreme winter temperatures destroyed vineyards and spring rains washed away pollen, reducing yields of wine grapes and fruit. Summer hailstorms destroyed cereal crops. Early frosts damaged garden vegetables and meager crops of fruit and grapes.

Partial and complete crop failures had occurred several years throughout central Europe in a row. In 1816 the weather was so bad that the grain had to be cut early in the highlands because early frost had made much of it suitable only for fodder or destroyed it in the field. The wetness was disastrous for sheep and cattle and many peasants and landlords alike saw half and more of their flocks perish. Floods ruined lowland fields and crops in those that stayed above water simply failed to mature because of low temperatures. The late summer and early fall rains of 1816 even ruined the grape harvest.

Thus a series of crop failures absorbed all food surpluses at the same time that there was general economic stagnation and depression caused by years of war. Add to this picture a million or more men released from the armed forces only to join the already swollen ranks of the unemployed and who must now be fed by families already facing starvation. All through the Hagsburg lands there was so much economic and social distress that by 1816 one high official claimed it was a worse year for the Monarchy than any of the twenty years of war that preceded it - to include years of territorial losses and huge debts from war reparations paid to France.

In Croatia-Slovenia on the Austrian military frontier there was great need for public assistance and even the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire reported failed harvests. Plague began to appear in the Balkans and threatened to invade Italy and Hungary.

Chronicles and journals of the times report that the winter of 1815 was very wet and the spring of 1816 was cold and late and followed by a late, wet summer. Wheat harvest did not start until August 20 and the incessant rain made it impossible to stay in the fields for two days in a row. Good wheat was rare and became very expensive. The saturated wheat the people kept for their own use made bread that was damp and sticky. It stuck to the knife when cut and stuck to the roof of the mouth when eaten.

In eastern Moravia, proximity to Russia and other Eastern grain producing areas prevented extreme shortages there. But in Bohemia conditions were so severe that many highland families would have died of starvation without public assistance. The Budweis and Bunslau districts had very low grain yields and in Polish Galicia, grain and potato crops both came up short in spite of being on the eastern fringes of the bad weather system. There was no Galician rye to export to western Bohemia as was usual,

nd low supplies led to sharp increases in price for all rain, flour and bread.

n Czech lands the higher the elevation of the fields the lower was the harvest of 1816. Likewise in some mountain districts of Austria the winter grains failed to grow or mature during three consecutive seasons and the situation for peasants in those areas was desperate. Two-thirds of the rye fields could not be plowed and planted for the coming winter because of weather, making the 1817 season even bleaker than the failed harvest of 1816. By the spring of 1817 there were no surpluses from previous years left anywhere and famine was widespread. In addition, there was as virtually no new wine in Bohemia in 1816. The vines froze early and the few grapes gathered at All Saints' made a wine that was undrinkable.

The cost of bread usually represented one half of a laboring family's income - to include agricultural workers who had to buy their bread. In Bohemia and Austria the flour content of the wheat harvested in 1816 was very low because so much of it was nearly rotten. In the Budweis district of Bohemia only one half the normal sheaves of rye were harvested and its weight per volume was far below normal. The poorest yields in northwest Bohemia were one third of normal in 1816 and the price of bread rose more sharply there than in other parts of Europe.

During 1816 bread cost more than three and a half times the normal price. In 1817 the price fell to two and a half times normal but it was still too high for families full of unemployed workers. They simply gave up eating bread. When they could buy it, it was sticky and almost inedible.

Bohemian farmers hired fewer field hands in an effort to curtail expense when low grain yields cut their income. They also competed with each other for any outside work that could produce income. Most peasant landholders could not support their families by farming alone and many counted on day-labor or were engaged in a trade to earn extra money even in the best of times.

During a normal winter all work associated with agriculture would stop, with the exception of caring for animals and threshing. Streams froze and mills powered by paddle wheels shut down, stopping any rural manufacturing on which many landless poor counted for their income.

Some found work mending roads and in other public ventures but the prolonged frozen conditions of 1816 prolonged the period of unemployment for almost anyone who needed day wages to subsist. Tradesmen and landholders also saw their purchasing power decrease and that intensified the effects of the usual winter crisis that faced the poor. Those who were working as herdsman, stable boys and household servants were let go. Those who managed to remain employed received such low wages they still could not buy enough bread for their families.

There was no alternative for the oats that were fodder for livestock and crops of oats were as meager as those of the other grains used in bread. In some places potatoes supplemented the oats used as fodder but they were not widely consumed by humans as yet. Farmers had no choice but to slaughter expensive cattle when fodder was no longer available or too expensive. Meat that could not be smoked flooded local markets and much of it went unsold.

When the price of cereal grains finally became so high that few could afford to buy flour or bread the fear of starvation led to riots, robbery and other violence. Food riots in various towns often ended in arson. Roving gangs looted granaries and assaulted anyone suspected of speculating in grain or of exporting it from local stores. As conditions worsened the episodes of arson became more frequent. Some riots led to indiscriminate burning - to include sacks of wheat and grain barns that had not yet been plundered. Farm buildings, livestock and farm dwellings alike met destruction at the hands of arsonists.

After the meager supplies of food from the harvest of 1816 were gone in the spring of 1817, many small landholders had to abandon their homes and to subsist by begging. These unfortunates would eat anything - even seed potatoes, nettles and wild vegetables. Some would live miserably in barns and do any work given them in order to share what little was available from a farmer's vegetable garden or poultry shed. Money had little value as wages. Shelter, food, drink, coal and other small items were the only compensation for labor that could be considered of real value.

In Vienna wholesale wheat and rye prices increased five times between 1814 and 1817. At the same time the currency lost one half of its value because of inflation and government devaluations. As food supplies became scarcer and bread prices climbed higher, wage levels that were already at a subsistence level fell ever lower and work became harder to find. Finally starvation loomed in the cities, too, and significant numbers of the population found themselves reduced to begging.

Sometimes the beggars banded together at night to search for grain in the countryside. They would resort to threats of violence to get what they needed. They looted private stores and forced peasants to sell provisions they had managed to put aside for their own needs for less than the market price. Some looked like walking cadavers accompanied by mobs of crying children. The poor unfortunates would suddenly appear from all directions at once as if they had come up out of the ground. They stood at church doors, at crossroads, in market places and anywhere that the public might pass. As they became increasingly desperate they began to consider themselves no longer bound by laws that protected private property. Groups of them would knock on doors or force entry into houses without permission. Local constables could only stand by

nd watch when the swarms of wandering beggars appeared and began pressing their demands. Eventually he threat they represented in the countryside prevented the transport of grain into areas where it was most needed.

ohemia was inundated by a flood of destitute men, women and children. Any community that made an active effort to feed its own hungry ran the risk of attracting hoards of beggars from the countryside. Newspapers complained that begging had reached disgraceful proportions in every state that tolerated it. The roaming beggars suffered from malnutrition and poor hygiene as well as lowered resistance to infection. Latent tuberculosis is reactivated by malnutrition and that became epidemic among some groups of beggars. The unnatural food they ate in desperation like weeds, grass or half-rotten and immature potatoes left them starved in the fields only made their condition worse. As they wandered about searching for food they spread the "famine fevers" - dysentery and typhus.

These roving crowds of unkempt destitute people carried the paleness of death in their cheeks, and a wild, numbed look of desperation in their eyes." Parents who could no longer care for their children simply abandoned them. Some highways were crowded with so many vagrants that the hordes resembled armies on the march.

In areas of Moravia, Bohemia, Silesia, Austria, Hungary, Transylvania and Galicia where the manorial system still existed the noble landlords were expected to provide for their tenant peasants in time of distress. A Moravian noble wrote the following: "The late year met with misfortune, all winter grains are still green. Nobody in my manor has any seed grain. The price is so high that it hurts! No one is able to buy, and also my private means is not in proportion to the enormity of the need for assistance: so several thousand persons become impoverished as the year progresses. Calamitous enough, that every farmer dismisses farm hands and maid-servants, and because of earth and lack of fodder sells half of his cattle ...Now I am left with introducing a Rumford soup plan in order to save the majority of my dependents from starvation." Rumford soup was named for an English count. It was a nutritious soup or watery stew made with bones and vegetables.)

In spite of the efforts of some noblemen to help their own tenants, beggars and vagrants continued to grow in numbers everywhere. By 1817 begging had become a chronic problem even in Vienna where police would normally expel outsiders and put indigenous beggars on public works projects.

1817 was called the "Year of the Beggars" in Europe. By the summer of 1817 the disturbances caused by beggars grew to the point of anarchy and near rebellion. Governments finally intervened to purchase public supplies of grain from Russia and other eastern areas that had escaped the bad growing seasons. However, transportation and distribution

problems delayed deliveries of Russian grain for as much as nine months, and the Russian grain was also so high-priced that it did little to reduce the cost of bread when it finally arrived.

Imperial Austria did not participate in any plan to buy Russian surplus because the backwards communication and transport system within the empire could not accommodate large supplies of grain. Besides, there was not enough gold in the treasury to deal in the international market. All they did was to subsidize urban bakeries to help keep the price of bread in the cities under control. They did nothing to help destitute rural populations who lacked the means to buy any food at any price. Charities did what they could with money raised in door to door campaigns.

In some areas teams of government workers visited starving villages to show the residents how to cook potatoes and other vegetables previously used only for fodder so that they could eat them themselves. After considerable resistance most peasants were desperate enough to try anything and they began to eat the potatoes they had on hand to feed their pigs. It did not take long for them to realize that the potatoes were better food than the rye that was the traditional peasant staple -they gave much more nutrition per planted acre than any grain. Taking note of how potato in northern Germany and Poland people had been eating potatoes since the famine of 1770-1771. Noting that their use of potatoes seemed to make a big difference in general nutrition during a time of dearth, the Austrian government demanded that potatoes as a food crop be planted throughout the empire. By 1820 potatoes were already becoming the most important staple food of peasants. (NOTE: Peasants became better nourished and rural populations grow faster than any time previously after 1817.)

The famine was extremely bad in Hungary where more than 20,000 Hungarians died of hunger and many more succumbed to famine diseases. A terrible blizzard at the end of January, 1816, buried livestock herds left outdoors and killed thousands of cattle, sheep and horses, eliminating an important source of income as well as food. The cold and rainy growing season affected harvests in all of Hungary to include Sloven, Croatia, and Transylvania. Flooded roads prevented transport of food relief to isolated areas and the famine ultimately spread to Transylvania and some Slavic districts. In the end Transylvania and eastern Hungary suffered the most and reports show that 18,000 persons starved to death in the Arad district while another 26,000 died in the districts of Szatmar, Krasso Bihar, and Bereg.

In parts of Bohemia and Moravia, Poland, Wurttemberg and Baden the famine was also severe. The most eastern areas of Bohemia suffered a bit less because they managed to get surplus Russian grain fairly early. In addition the famine caused many deaths in the Habsburg province of Lombardy where the population was forced to live mostly

n roots and herbs. Eastern cantons of Switzerland where a ne-pound loaf of bread cost five times the daily wage of a killed weaver recorded many deaths from starvation while the numbers of famine victims in the southern alkan swelled from the spread of an epidemic of plague.

farmers who had a large enough holding to actually profit from the high prices of farm products tended to hoard what money they had because large farms near cities were prime targets for arsonists - cash would be needed to rebuild if a farmstead burned. Besides that livestock losses often more than made up for any profit they made from grain. Those who had any cash dared not spend it openly but they could invest it in their farms in some way. In response to the high market prices for grain some of them risked putting more acres into production. Some took large mortgages on their farms to finance the venture during 1817-1818. Six years of much better weather began in 1818 and bumper crops of grain resulted - creating a large surplus for which there was no demand. Now farmers with large debts were faced with depressed prices.

Even before the series of bad years a growing rural population had seen how they could no longer feed themselves from small land-holdings that became even smaller each time assets were distributed to a new generation. They could eke by when harvests were plentiful but when a harvest was deficient or other circumstances arose - like demobilization sending thousands of soldiers back to their villages - the necessary balance was completely upset. They began to realize there was no margin for safety in subsistence farming and that this problem could only become worse.

Farmers who relied on handicrafts like woodworking and blacksmithing to increase their incomes found that they could not compete with the cheap factory products that began to flood the market. They were trapped between unreliable and inadequate farming and industrial competition.

When grain prices began to collapse as relief supplies from Russia arrived in the autumn of 1817, the farmers who had risked mortgaging their property to produce more cereal crops found themselves facing bankruptcy. Up to one-half of the small peasant landowners and some 10 percent of the largest peasant proprietors in the Austrian Empire lost everything in forced auction sales during 1819.

All these circumstances combined with the fear and social discontent created by twenty-five years of war. As distress from the famine grew, thousands saw no solution but to migrate. The first waves of emigrants seeking to escape the famine were already on the roads to Dutch ports as early as 1816. By the spring of 1817 those roads were logged with families pushing carts loaded with their possessions. Barefoot children accompanied them as they made their way, hoping they would find space on a ship bound for America. The lucky ones had a cow to pull their

wagon and to give milk to nourish them along the way. Most of them had little money and they hoped to find a Captain who would be willing to give them passage on a contract as indentured servants.

The flow of would-be emigrants from Bohemia and Wurttemberg became so heavy and put so much pressure on Dutch port facilities that Dutch authorities finally closed their frontiers, letting only those who could show proof that they already had a berth on a ship go on to the port cities.

Most of the 50,000 people who made it to port cities ended by selling everything they owned in order to maintain themselves while waiting for passage. There were too few ships and only 15,000 succeeded in emigrating. Those who failed had to return to their villages as beggars. Some families who could no longer find anything to eat abandoned their children in the hopes that someone might feed them. Some died of famine diseases like typhus, dysentery and tuberculosis along the way. Those who made it back to their old villages looked like walking skeletons dressed in rags when they arrived. At that time the law required every village to take care of its own and all of the failed emigrants who returned drained the resources available for charity.

Others who had been considering emigration to America began to have second thoughts when so many returned as destitute beggars. They decided that getting to America was too difficult and they would be better off taking advantage of a program that offered free land to Germans who were willing to settle in Russia. Besides, there was plenty of grain in Russia.

Thus, all during 1816 and 1817 desperate waves of migrants from Wurttemberg, Alsace, Switzerland and Bohemia moved along the routes leading east through the Habsburg lands hoping to settle on free land in the Russian empire while others from Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Italy, the Balkans, Germany and Switzerland moved in the opposite direction, hoping to reach a Dutch or Belgian port and a boat to America. Austria finally took official steps to halt futile attempts to emigrate from Bohemia in 1818. By 1820 those measures accompanied by low prices for grain and higher real incomes kept most peasants more or less satisfied to remain in their villages. The first mass migration of the nineteenth century was over by 1820.

It was a very long time before the overall effects of the six years of dearth and two years of famine began to wane. The effects on population growth was particularly significant.

During 1813 following Napoleon's disaster in Russia there was a great increase in the number of marriages as young men sought to avoid conscription. Consequently there was a very high number of births in 1814. Napoleon's empire collapsed in a series of battles during that same year and the troop movements that accompanied them triggered a

erious typhus epidemic. Deaths from disease and from war reached a very high number in all age groups. In 1816 there was another widespread epidemic of typhus and smallpox that did not break until 1819. It took the lives of many small children in Bohemia and elsewhere in the Austrian Empire.

Under the best conditions only 50% of children born in the Habsburg lands before 1860 survived to age five. Fifty percent of those who died would die before age 2. Another 50% of those who survived past age 5 would die before reaching the age of 10. During 1816 and 1817, malnutrition reduced the number of births and those who managed to survive children saw over 20% of their newborns die of infectious diseases. In some villages the deaths of newborns coupled with deaths among older children during the same period equaled 50% of the total population of children. It was not until the 1850s that the population of Bohemia began to show the same numbers it had before the famine of 1816-1817.

The Congress of Vienna that dictated the peace terms after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo could not have anticipated the disaster that awaited their peace plans. Before administrators could be assigned to new territories the governments concerned were forced to deal with financial crisis, unemployment, hunger, epidemic, rioting and looting, begging and vagrancy and large scale emigration. Widespread political anxiety made fertile ground in which many liberal ideas took root, even in the most conservative areas of the Austrian Empire. When the market for grain finally settled into a low price structure and the normal quiet returned to the countryside, there was little support for these ideas except among student groups in the cities. The students led a failed liberal rebellion that ended after one that took place in Paris in 1830 (NOTE: that rebellion also followed a short war in Italy, bad harvests and widespread hunger). After another famine in 1846-1847, liberals staged an armed rebellion in Prague, Vienna, and Hungary which finally won significant concessions from the Emperor and set the stage for the future.

There were desperate waves of migrants from Wurttemberg, Alsace and Switzerland moving to the east through the Habsburg lands in an attempt to reach the Russian empire. Others were moving in the opposite direction, hoping to reach the Rhine and then a Dutch port and a boat to America.

Destitute migrants made their way on foot, pushing carts loaded with family possessions. Those who reached port cities could not pay for passage and hoped to reach America as indentured servants. Some succeeded in emigrating but many were stranded in port cities. By April, 1817, they had become a "whole multitude" with an "unbelievable number of small children" moving on the highways toward northern ports. Ultimately Dutch police began to force new arrivals without passage already guaranteed to turn back

at the border. Those who made it as far as a port but failed to get passage for want of enough ships were finally forced to try to return to their home villages as beggars.

Official measures to suppress futile attempts to emigrate and a fall in the price of bread finally brought a virtual halt to emigration from Bohemia by 1818. In the 1820s low grain prices and higher real incomes kept peasants more or less satisfied to remain in their villages.

But the effects of a famine endure. Under the best conditions before 1860, children born in the Habsburg lands had a 50% chance of surviving to age five. Fifty percent of those would die before age two -- representing an infant mortality of about 12% per year up to age two and somewhat better (less than 9%) up to age 5. Of those who survived past age five another 50% would die before reaching the age of ten. During 1816 and 1817 the effects of malnutrition greatly reduced the number of births and the very young were particularly susceptible to infectious diseases. Infant mortality among newborns reached 20-27% per year in Czech lands during the years of famine and remained that high through 1819. But we have to add to that the annual deaths of children already a year old or older. In some villages as many as 50% of the children under the age of five died in 1818 and again in 1819.

Young adults who had had Tuberculosis as children found themselves stricken again as a result of abnormal diets and many of them died. People everywhere resorted to consuming indigestible foods or carrion meat, herbs, roots, grass and fungus. Some made bread from a mixture of bran, straw and sawdust. Others ate nettles, and spoiled grain. These people often developed a fatal diarrhea. It was 1820 before birth and mortality rates began to return to anything near normal.

One of the more positive effects of the famine of 1817 was the acceptance of potatoes for human consumption in eastern Europe. Until this period potatoes were widely regarded as fodder and fit only for pigs and other animals except in parts of northern Germany and Poland where the famine of 1770-71 had already converted much of the population. The great hunger of 1816 had forced peasants everywhere to eat potatoes and it soon became apparent that potatoes were better food than the rye which was the traditional peasant staple -- they gave much more nutrition than grain for each acre of land required to grow them. This also made them relatively cheap.

The government soon demanded that potatoes be planted throughout Habsburg lands in order to insure a sufficient food supply. By 1820 potatoes were already becoming the most important staple food of peasants. As a result peasants became better nourished and rural populations grew faster than any time previously after the famine of 1816-1817. (It was not long before peasants learned to make whisky, brandy, beer and wine from potatoes.)

ohemians had a saying the if grain is expensive, linen is heap. Another said the "when the poor live cheaply, hey dress well." This reflected the fact that so much of he buying power of most of the people was absorbed by urchases of bread and foodstuffs that there was little oney left to buy other goods in local markets. While read remained high priced a new coat, shawl or shirt had o be done without. Shortages of things like firewood, oney, raw silk, hemp, chestnuts and oils caused by the xcessive rains of 1816 contributed to high prices and owered demand for these commodities. Sales of anything hat was merely essential to comfort and not really a ecessity stagnated while inventories grew and prices ontinued to fall. What money there was did not circulate.

he few farmers who had large enough holdings to ctually make a profit from the high prices of farm roducts tended to hoard what money they had, keeping hese savings out of circulation. Some of the better-off easants gave up buying industrial goods in favor of haritable donations to assist those who were destitute. here was also great fear of social unrest which had iredy destroyed what wealth there might have been in ome areas and those who had any money dared not spend t conspicuously.

ut for the most part any windfall that had come to armers because of high grain prices was soon offset by osses, particularly to their livestock. Rioting beggars ften burned the larger farmsteads near market towns and if he owners of these properties had any extra money it was eeded to rebuild destroyed buildings. Smaller farms also ost their small gains when faced with constant looting by agrants. In the towns those who might have profited from ales of food often saw those profits vanish in the endless ood riots.

n the early autumn of 1817 grain prices began to collapse as he relief supplies that had been purchased in the east inally reached western cities. The few peasants who had aken the risk of putting more land into cereal production in rder to take advantage of the higher prices, and now had o pay higher rents or carried mortgage debts, found hemselves facing bankruptcy. "As many as one-half of the mall peasant landowners and some 10 percent of the argest peasant proprietors in the Habsburg lands met with uin in 1819. Forced auction sales of mortgaged peasant arms became commonplace in all provinces."

hus, in response to rising prices, production of cereal grains as increased during 1817-1818 generating a significant urplus for which there was no demand. Eventually ommodity prices collapsed and for the next five or six ears as the weather conditions brought better harvests, he principal concern of most peasants was depressed prices.

he Congress of Vienna had changed political boundaries fter the defeat of Napoleon but before administrators ould be assigned to new territories governments were forced

to deal with financial crisis, unemployment, hunger, epidemic, rioting and looting, begging and vagrancy and large scale emigration. Political anxiety was widespread and liberal ideas began to take root in the most conservative parts of the Habsburg lands. But with the return of low grain prices and cheap bread the normal quiet had returned to the countryside and there was little support for these ideas except among student groups in the cities. Liberalism remained more or less ineffective in Habsburg lands for the next 20 years. In the middle of the nineteenth century the numbers seeking to emigrate from Eastern Europe began to increase. People who had already emigrated successfully began to return to their homelands to recruit more emigrants. They received a bounty from American companies and individuals who would also pay the passage of an entire family and thus secure all family members over the age of 10 as workers for three to seven years. The possibility of free passage and ample time to learn English and about the country while under the "protection" of an employer was very tempting to folk who were worried about limited land and growing families.

To add romance and inspiration to the practical aspects of their seductive sales pitch these agents, called "Neulander" described America as a place where streets were paved with gold and where housemaids became ladies and peasants became noblemen. But most of all, the officers of the government were there by the will of the people and the people could remove them from office. That had a particular appeal to peasants who often felt they were bullied by imperial bureaucrats. The general appeal of the Neulander's pitch recruited those who could not pay as well as those who could. And it led to victimization of many of the emigrants by the more unscrupulous Neulanders and the ships' Captains they worked for. In many cases even those who had paid for passage were robbed and cheated so that they owed their Captain enough money upon arrival that they, too, had to contract to work to pay the debt before they could hope to move to the free land west of the Mississippi.

But I do not want to dwell on how easily peasants might have been seduced to contract for passage, to sell everything they owned and depart for America on the spur of the moment. What I want to address here are some of the factors that made them so susceptible to the sales pitches presented by the Neulanders. They had to be discontent or they would not have been so easily convinced that life in America would be so much better that it was worth whatever they had to risk to go there.

Textile manufacturers suggested that subsidies and public loans would help to provide employment for dismissed workers in Austria and Czech lands. The provincial government of Bohemia requested public subsidy of linen production. In all these cases the Emperor approved the subsidies but the maze of imperial bureaucracy failed to provide any tangible relief. Where funds were made available they were grossly inadequate except, perhaps, in

he case of the Austrian Military Frontier where 3,000,000 lorins were made available to avert famine. Private charities did what they could. In Vienna 500,000 lorins were raised in a door to door campaign to assist over 6,000 indigent working men and their families. Similar charities soliciting cash, food and clothing sprang up in ohemia.

ne of the first effects is the doubling of the death rate in a iven village. That is always accompanied by a very low umber of births and a decline in the number of marriages. uring 1813, following Napoleon's disaster in Russia, all hrough Europe there had been an unusually high number of arriages. Most of these were contracted in order to avoid onscription since newly-weds were exempt from the draft. his was followed by a high number of births in 1814. uring that same year Napoleon's Empire collapsed and roop movements triggered a serious typhus epidemic and eaths from war and disease reached a very high number in ll age groups. In 1816 Typhus again became widespread nd smallpox broke out among small children.

amines have been accompanied by serious epidemics ecause standards of hygiene are lowered, because the esistance of the population to infection is reduced by under r malnutrition and also because the diffusion of contagious isease is promoted by migration of the population in earch of food. The European typhus epidemic of 1816-19 an be traced to weather patterns, famine and economic istress...

overty, outdated administration, and the famine joined to revent good remedial measures from being initiated.

y Homeland Trip

y *Leora Wilkes*

ast June when we returned from our trip to Bohemia, Bob aulson remarked with tongue in cheek, that we weren't one yet, and that we were expected to contribute something" to the newsletter. I know it's been a long time oming, but then, I didn't want to hog space or be first in ine...

he trip was a revelation. I learned so many things, and et, it left me with so many more questions. I'm hoping omeone can enlighten me about a few of these things.

y mother was Eleanor Dietz Gulden, daughter of John homas Dietz and Theresa Portner. Mom loved doing enealogy. Unfortunately she didn't get much help from er family. We were all so busy raising families of our own nd the last thing we were concerned about at the time was here Great, Great, Great Grandpa was from. Of course, his was BC (Before Computers) so the most I ever did to elp was to put her information in typewritten form. I even anaged to screw that up when I had Junior being born ten

years before his mother was born. Well, at least she had a good laugh.

Before I try to lay out my complicated questions, I'd like to mention some of the things that impressed me, even if they may not be earth-shaking delights to someone else. Being a gardener, I was so impressed by the forget-me-nots blooming by the little Rindl monument and the one at Neubau, and even in some of the forsaken cemeteries. I asked our young consultant when we were at Rindl, about who takes care of the flowers because they seemed to be in such an out-of-the-way place. His remark was almost demeaning. "What's to take care of? They take care of themselves." Well, he has different flowers than I do nothing I have takes care of itself.

Our hotels were delightful, especially the Hogenbogen hotel. I will never forget the breakfasts. I have been on a tour to Europe before and have never had breakfasts like these. When I got home, I decided I couldn't look another loaf of pan-o-gold in the eye. I hauled out my recipe book, bought some yeast and flour and baked bread again ... something I haven't done for at least 20 years. And the beer..oh my. I'm not even a great beer drinker, but German beer is something else. The only German phrase I was able to teach my travel companion was, "Ein Dunkles Bier, Bitte!" It was probably the frequent repetition of the phrase that brought about her and my language proficiency! Traveling into Bohemia was interesting, but also sad and depressing. Perhaps it was because the Czechs really didn't like our being there, or maybe it was because it was going back in time, back to times that weren't so great. But it did explain why our ancestors chose to take a chance on America. What I don't understand is how they ever scraped up enough money to afford the trip, especially since some of them came with many children.

I enjoyed the Heimattreffen. Unfortunately I didn't get up the nerve to go out and talk to some of the people there until the second night, and while I found a really nice family from Weissensulz, my great grandfather's hometown, the language barrier made our conversation difficult. I do understand German, when it is spoken slowly enough, but I know he could tell by the blank look on my face that I comprehended only half of what he was saying. The elderly man had been 15 at the end of WWII when the German residents had been driven from Bohemia. I could understand that much. He would have loved to tell me the story. They referred me to his daughter who knew some English, but she looked just as blank as I did when I asked her questions in English. I left them my address and hoped someone would write. Later I wished there would have been a bulletin board somewhere in the hall to leave an address for someone ... anyone ... in Bohemia to correspond with.

And now for my questions: Does anyone have a map that shows the boundaries of Kreis Bischoftienitz and Kreis Pilzen? When my mother searched for ancestry, she had

ome coming from each of those places, which I am guessing re like political boundaries-like our counties. Yet the illages such as Weissensulz, Rindl, Neubau, and Fuchsberg re all within a stone's throw of each other. Is there an xplanation for this'?

ohann and Maria (Hoffman) Portner are my maternal great randparents. From several different sources I have seen hem to emigrate from: Rind, Wonischen, Kreis ischofteinitz, Kreis Pilzen

know this area was under Austrian rule at the time of heir emigration in 1873. But I'm a bit confused about the ther 3 origins. Having had the opportunity to visit these owns on our tour in June, I know that Wonischen and Rindl re 2 different towns and I believe that "Kreis" means County" so two different counties are also cited. Does nyone have documented information as to where they ctually emigrated from?

hen there is the matter of Johann and Marianna (Helget) offman, the parents of Maria (Hoffman) Portner (my reat, great grandparents). Some of the family histories ay Johann and Marianna also immigrated to America hen Johann and Maria Portner came, or shortly after-no ate found. Other histories say that Johann Hoffman, who as born in Rindl in 1810, died in 1892 in New Ulm, but that is wife, Marianna died at Rindl in 1877.

nother version that my mother recorded, I'm sure by word f mouth from elderly uncles and aunts, was that Joseph ortner 1, Johann Portner's son (and my grandmother's ldest brother) came to America in about 1870 with his randmother, Marianna (Helget) Hoffman and the offman and Helget families. Her account says that ohann Hoffman (Marianna's husband) died in Bohemia.

o now we have conflicting reports about who died where! s there anyone out there with the answer to this question?

he went on to say that Joseph Portner 1 started building a omestead for his parents (Johann and Maria Portner) and amily who were to come to America in 1872 or 1873. The omestead was near Clear Lake in Siegel Township, Brown ounty, MN about 9 miles from New Ulm. While cutting ogs, a falling log bruised Joseph's arm. Doctors were few; he bruise was neglected and eventually turned to cancer, alled "knochen froes" in German. When his parents rived 2 years later, the arm was very bad, and the only hing that could have saved his life was to amputate the rm. Joseph would not allow it. At that time no anesthetics ere available, and Joseph did not feel it would do much ood. Two years later he died. His tombstone records his eath date as Jan. 11, 1874. He would have been 21 1/2 ears old. Another son was born to Johann and Maria on ovember 4, 1875 and he was named Joseph too. I remember im well as he lived in Pierz. We visited him often and my om had a deep respect for him. He died at St. Mary's illa in Pierz on Feb. 9, 1963.

We were told that Rindl was destroyed by fire after WWII. I may have missed the information. but I don't recall anyone saying what happened to Neubau. Can anyone tell me what happened to that town?

Enclosed is my membership fee. I enjoy getting the newsletter and especially the histories of the villages and the people along with recipes and comments of your readers. Thank you.

Leora Wilkes
606 Park Ave. S.E.
Pierz, MN 56085

Rootsweb Joins the Elite

RootsWeb.com has long been recognized as an influential web site by many, both in and outside of the genealogical community. In February of 2000, RootsWeb.com was named "Best of the Best" in Forbes Magazine. The same year, it was voted "Best Genealogy Site on the World Wide Web" by readers of Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter. And now, just this week, it has been honored as one of Time magazine's "50 Best Websites."

(www.time.com/time/2002/tech/best/complete.html)

Rather than focusing on site traffic, Time chose to honor sites it predicts will be the most useful for Internet users during the upcoming year. Sites were chosen in various categories including arts and entertainment, banking, travel, car shopping, and genealogy. With a combination of free information and the unique community and culture that has developed over the years, it's no wonder that RootsWeb was included. Thanks to all who support this growing and vibrant community, and congratulations for making RootsWeb.com one of the best sites.

GBHS Picnic August 24, 2002

Don Heinrich Toltzman to Speak

The GBHS' annual picnic is scheduled for Saturday August 24, 2002 at Herman Heights Park in New Ulm. Social time begins at 11 a.m. with feasting on delicious German-Bohemian, German and American foods and desserts will commence at 12 noon. Musical entertainment will be provided by Erwin Suess. Bring a dish to pass, eating utensils, and lawn chairs. Coffee and juice drink will be provided. Beer and pop will be available.

This year we have added an extra bonus. Don Heinrich Toltzman, Curator of the German-American Collection and Director of the German-American Studies Program at the

iversity of Cincinnati, and serves as president of the Society for German-American Studies will speak to those in attendance. Mr. Toltzman has edited two books on New Ulm: Jacob Nix's The Sioux Uprising in Minnesota and J. H. Trasser's New Ulm in Word and Picture, and has edited and published three books: L. A. Fritsche's Brown County New Ulm, Minnesota Pioneers and Their Families; Memories of the Battle of New Ulm: Personal Accounts of the Sioux Uprising; L. A. Fritsche's History; Outbreak and Massacre by the Dakota Indians in Minnesota in 1862; and Ernst P. Satterlee's Minute Account.

This event is a joint venture between New Ulm's Junior Pioneers, Brown County Historical Society, and the German-Bohemian Heritage Society.

Queries

I am researching the family of Leonard Bartl who originated in Unterhuetten, Bohemia and settled in New Ulm, MN. Leonard was born June 4, 1829, married an unnamed woman (to date) and fathered three children before coming to America in the 1880's. His children are: John Bartl born May 10, 1863 --married Theresa Zangel and lived in New Ulm

Anna Bartl born Feb. 22, 1866 --married George Schroedl and lived in Fairfax

Margaretta Bartl born Aug. 5, 1896 --married John Baar and lived in Sleepy Eye

I'm interested in information validating Unterhuetten as the village of origin, his marriage record and/or the birth records of his children.

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Corrections

In the article "My Cousin Albert" in the March 2002 edition of the *Heimatbrief* the email address of Terry Kita was printed incorrectly. Terry's correct email address is: terry.kita@federalcartridge.com.

Also in the March 2002 *Heimatbrief* and error was made in the article "Experience in Private Research". At the top of column 2 on page 9 under the heading "Research on ancestors" should read:

Grandparents (Husband/wife)	4	5	/	6	7
Parents (Husband/wife)	2		/	3	
Myself (Researcher)				1	

New Gag Family Book

A new book titled "The Gag Family, German-Bohemian Artists In America" will soon be available from Afton Press. The book was written by Julie L'Enfant with contributing research by GBHS founder Robert Paulson. Orders may be placed directly with Afton Press at 1-800-436-8443 or at www.aftonpress.com. See the following page for a complete description.

Coming Events

August 24, 2002

GBHS Picnic 11 a.m. Herman Heights Park
New Ulm

September 21, 2002

GBHS Board of Directors Meeting
9 a.m. at Research Center