

# German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 822 New Ulm, MN 56073-0822

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Louis Lindmeyer, Editor

## Coming Events

**April 12, 1996**

Old Time Dance  
Turner Hall New Ulm, 8:00 P.M.

**May 18, 1996**

Spring General Member Meeting  
Lower Level New Ulm Public Library  
9:00 A.M.

**June 9-12, 1996**

**FEEFHS Convention**

Thunderbird Hotel  
Minneapolis, MN

**August 17, 1996**

Annual Picnic  
Herman Heights Park  
New Ulm

**October 19, 1996**

Fall General Member Meeting  
Lower Level New Ulm Public Library, 9:00  
A.M.

sponsoring an Old Time Dance at Turner Hall in New Ulm on Friday April 12, 1996. Music will be provided by the German-Bohemian All Star Band and the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers. Admission will be \$5.00 per person which includes a late evening lunch. The public is invited. Bring a friend or two!

## **General Member Meeting Set**

Mark your calendars for May 18, 1996 for the GBHS Spring Member Meeting. At the present time a guest speaker and agenda are being planned. You will be notified by mail of the details.

The meeting will take place at the New Ulm Public Library downstairs meeting room. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m.

## **German-Bohemian Heritage Singers Making Music**

During the month of March, the German-Bohemian Heritage singers are scheduled to record a new cassette tape. The new tape will include many lively German tunes as well as German-Bohemian dialect songs. Bill Ness of Shady Grove Music will do the recording in his New Ulm studio. The cassette is scheduled for release in early summer. Watch for it.

## **Newsletter Deadline**

The next edition of this newsletter is scheduled for publication in June. If you wish to contribute an article, send us a query, or write us a letter, our deadline is May 1. Thank you!

## **Dance! Dance! Dance!**

The German-Bohemian Heritage Society will be

*(Editors note: The next two short stories were taken from the 1995 Egerlander Yearbook and translated by Karen Hobbs.)*

## **Glockensagen: Bell Tales**

### **The weighty bell.**

During a time of savage warfare many cannons, cannonballs and bullets had already been devoured in the murderous battles. In order to produce new weapons some of the bells of the city of Bischofteinitz were requisitioned. The largest bell was taken from the tower in Blisowa and it was sent to Bischofteinitz.

Several sturdy men loaded it on a "Bretterwagen" hitched to two robust horses. However, they were not able to haul the wagon with the heavy bell to its destination. So two more horses, considered to be the strongest and most powerful in the vicinity, were also hitched up and the team of four managed, with great difficulty and suffering, to haul the wagon and bell as far as the so-called "Hlaser Waldchen." Here, in spite of all efforts and many a blow from the cracking whip on the patient horses, it could go no further. This was seen as an evil omen and the bell was returned again to Blisowa where it still hangs today in the tower and at certain times it can be heard ringing.

### **Der Dukatenacker**

The farm buildings of farmer Michel Schmidt in Gemeschitz (near Bischofteinitz) were devastated like all the other farms in the village due to the long terrible turmoil and horror of war. For almost three decades it lay there bleak and desolate. The men who owned them had enlisted in the Kaiser's mercenary army at the outbreak of the war and those who remained had fled to the nearby forests for protection from injury and atrocities. Now more peaceful times had returned and new life bloomed in the Schmidt farmstead. The buildings around the courtyard, which had been burned down and destroyed by enemy war hordes were rebuilt from the ground up and the fields left fallow for so long were tilled once again. But profitable harvests and money did not improve despite careful effort although each year Michel consoled himself that

the next would be better. The condition of his cattle also failed to improve. From the grey dawn until late at night Michel toiled and tinkered as did his wife and all his helpers, but when the year ended he was not one trifling penny richer. More than once he had only enough to just meet his obligation to the landlord and the Kaiser. While the remaining farmers saw their own fortunes improve slowly but visibly by their labor, at the Schmidt farm things declined more and more in spite of industrious effort and care. Every day the farmer and his wife spoke of how they hoped to make it again only to the "Feierabend" [end of the season, closing time, harvest] so they might receive God's blessing on their efforts and things would get better.

Some years later it was again harvest time in the country. The same farmer Schmidt, with his wife, his bigger children, his helping hands and even with some cutters who worked all year in the nearby Bohemian forest began work in several of his grain fields with sickle and scythe. One day, weary from the stooping and bending of the strenuous work Michel went straight to bed at day's end [Feierabend - closing time]. In the morning he got up with the cock's first crowing and awakened the helping hands and the cutters, for today it was a large wheat field that was "im Verlorenen" an der Reihe. [next in sequence?].

After doing necessary work in the house and yard, Michel and his crew set out on the path that led over a ridge and to the large wheat field. Arriving there considering the work to be done, everyone stopped to enjoy for a moment the wonderful sight offered by the wheat seedheads undulating in the soft morning breeze over which the first rays of the rising August morning sun were shining down. And now, in the name of God as was usual, the laborious work began, with the farmer having to be the first to pull his scythe through the standing stalks of wheat. He had done only a few cuts when he noticed that exactly at the last cut one stalk of wheat fell to the ground much more quickly than the others. He bent down to look closely at the wheat spike and what a miracle! The spike lying on the ground glistened with gold -- three bright Ducats within it. Quite elated Michel happily (blissfully) picked up the heavy seedhead and showed it to the others there with him who were all astonished at such a strange happening. On the

next Sunday the happy farmer Schmidt went with his three golden Ducats into the city where he negotiated with a goldsmith to exchange them for a pretty sum of silver coins. From that hour on the fortunes of the Schmidt farmstead prospered and it soon counted among the best farms in the village. The field where once a stalk of wheat carried three golden Ducats is nowadays popularly called the "Dukatenacker." It belongs to farmhouse number one in Semeschitz and has a size of two hectares and 60 a. Because of the size of the field and its irregular terrain there is another popular saying: that three shepherds can graze sheep on the "Dukatenacker" and never see each other.

## **Village Spotlight**

### **The Village of Wasserau and the Rubey Family**

#### **Part 3**

With this issue of the newsletter we give you the third and final part of the story of the village of Wasserau and the Rubey family. This important piece of work will be very valuable to those of you doing family histories. There are many familiar family names along with dates, villages of residence and house numbers. I would again like to thank Vern Rubey of New Ulm for bringing this historic document to my attention. I would also like to thank Johann Gröbner who authored this unusually detailed and wonderfully written story, and Harold Traurig for the many hours it must have taken to translate this document into English. You have all done a great service in preserving our German-Bohemian heritage. Thank you!

#### **THE STORY OF THE RUBEY FAMILY of Wasserau in the Parish of Muttersdorf (St. Sebastian)**

**by Johann Gröbner**  
**(Blaibach, West Germany)**

**Translated by Harold Traurig**  
**Lexington, Kentucky 1988**  
**(Grandson of Andreas and Barbara Rubey of Wasserau)**

Andreas Rubey with his wife Barbara Dietz emigrated to the USA, they had six children, two sons and four daughters.

This Andreas Rubey did not want to emigrate but the outlook for a means of living in Wasserau for their children was very poor. In addition, at this time there was an illness of early childhood that was killing many infants and children in Wasserau (Note: It is known that Andreas and Barbara Rubey had a total of 14 children, only eight lived to adulthood.) At this time there was a great deal of advertisement encouraging people to emigrate to the USA. The agents for these emigration agencies were always looking for ways to entice people to emigrate because they received a fee for each one who emigrated. They would loan money to people under a contract that required them to emigrate if they could not repay the loan. The agents for the emigration agency looked for as many people as possible to agree to emigrate because this increased their fee. The land contracting for immigrants in this case was Minnesota, USA, and they were willing to pay for the emigration expenses but the immigrants had to agree to repay these expenses on installments once they were settled in Minnesota. The immigrants had to work very hard to repay these debts but Andreas and Barbara Rubey must have repaid somehow because they became naturalized citizens of the USA in 1906. Andreas borrowed money under such a contract but later could not accumulate the money necessary to repay, therefore, he had no choice except to sell his remaining interest in his part of the family farm and emigrate to Minnesota. During these times no one had much money, only large property owners had any extra resources. Rents and other expenses had to be paid in money and not labor (as it was earlier) and many had to borrow money to continue to operate their farms. There was so little money that even relatives did not have the means to help one another.

The people who loaned money were very hard, charging high interest and taking advantage of the small farmers. A few years after Andreas and Barbara and their children emigrated to Minnesota, Andreas' brother Johann was able to buy back Andreas' portion of the family farm; Johann Rubey then moved his family from house #45 to house #46, the original Rubey house.

The part of the Rubey farm associated with house #45 (Johann Rubey's family) was passed to other owners sometime during the late 1930's to early 1940's because there were no children to inherit it.

Johann Rubey (born 3/13/1856), Andreas Rubey's brother, married Katharina Wiedl (born 6/13/1856; died 12/21/1928) of house #1 in Wasserau on 10/19/1880. They were married in the church in Heiligenkreuz and lived in house #45 in Wasserau (next to Andreas Rubey). They had four children: Georg (5/13/1881) Johann (3/12/1884) Thresia - Married Johann Warta in Weissensulz (died 1968) Josef - killed in the First World War

Their son Johann went to business school in Hostau and was in the Austrian-Hungarian army; he did not return to Wasserau after World War I because the part of Austria in which Wasserau was located was given to Czechoslovakia. He remained in Vienna and lived at Holteigasse #6 (This is in the north of Vienna, north of the Danube River). His son Engelbert Rubey (born 8/13 1921), a former Austrian government official, lives there today (1989). He has three sons Norbert, Werner and Harald.

(Translator note: I visited Engelbert Rubey and his wife Josefa (Kaiser) in 1988. He had just retired from his government position, which would be equivalent Minister (Hofrat) of Land Management for the Austrian province that surrounds Vienna - Niederosterreich (Lower Austria), essentially northeast Austria. He was also director of the College where land management engineering is taught. His son Werner Rubey (born 1957; wife Elvira, a chemist), is a graduate of this College and now holds his father's government position. His son Norbert Rubey (born 1955) is a professional musician, specializing in choir direction, and represented Austria in the Olympics in ballroom dancing. His son Harald Rubey (born 1960; wife Cornelia "Connie", elementary school teacher; one daughter, Michaelia-1985) is a physician in Vienna. I met them all, they were very happy to meet a member of the New Ulm Rubey family.)

Johann Rubey's son Georg Rubey Married Maria Hilpert (house #15, Wasserau) on 5/21/1907. During the years 1903-1905 Georg had to serve in the Austrian-Hungarian army; he was stationed in Tarnopol, Galicia -then a part of the Austrian Empire

now partly in Poland and Russia. After returning home to Wasserau, he took over the farm and house #46 which had just been vacated by the emigration of Andreas Rubey to the USA. The Rubey families must have been very good farmers because they were able to retain their land in their family's hands for many generations even though the land in Wasserau was stony and not very fertile. During Georg's time in the army in Poland and later during the First World War he learned a great deal about where better soil than that in Wasserau might be found and where farmers would have a better life. So, after the First World War he always thought about how it would be possible to leave Wasserau and obtain a bigger and better farm. With the poor soil in Wasserau it was necessary to be able to earn money outside of farming in order to make a living. But there was no industry of any kind in the vicinity or any other job possibilities. There remained the border between Bohemia and Bavaria beyond which there was the possibility of earning extra money.

Ninety-five percent of the inhabitants of Wasserau and the surrounding area, during the period around 1900, lived by farming or by breeding and raising cattle. A relationship between raising cattle and the nearby border suggested a way to earn money.

On the border with Bavaria, which is just 6 Km (2.3 miles) to the west, lived people referred to as "Black Bordercrossers"; they were smugglers. In these times each animal that was being transported to be sold had to have a "cattle pass" that was to be presented to the authorities on demand. These could be obtained from the local administration and most of these documents were issued in the villages of Unterhutte or Paadorf on the Wasserau side of the border. These smugglers made a living by slipping back and forth across the border, of course without paying the custom tolls, especially during dark and foggy nights. Saving the custom tolls, an additional monetary profit, was the result of these activities. These smugglers especially liked to drive young (castrated) bull oxen across the Bavarian border. Now Georg Rubey took good advantage of this situation by buying young bull oxen that were underfed, he would fatten them up and then sell them to the smugglers. These smugglers were well known throughout the region and visited every village at least once a week to look for young bull oxen to buy. These would be herded

across the border at the next opportunity to the cattle markets in Cham or Rotz in Bavaria.

Georg and Maria Rubey had four children:

Franz (born 2/7/1907)

Theresa (1/11/1911) died 1930

Maria (9/4/1914)

Barbara (7/1/ 1919)

In his son, Franz Rubey, who in the years following the First World War was taking a strong interest in farming, Georg Rubey saw an eager promoter for his old plan to obtain a better farm than the one in Wasserau. Young Franz was the driving force behind Georg's old plan to acquire a larger farm with better soil and more agreeable working conditions. The year, 1930, became the year of destiny for the Rubey family of Wasserau. The old farm in Wasserau was sold and the Peternhof farm, consisting of 69 acres, in Metzling was purchased. (Translators note: Metzling, now called Meclov by the Czechs, was a town a little larger than Wasserau; it is 6 miles east southeast of Wasserau.) Such an undertaking for a family was something people write songs about. Many needed household and personal items had to be sold, but diligence and hard work with the good soil of the new farm in Metzling they were able to establish a very substantial farming operation, one of a very high technical level for the time with especially outstanding cattle and horse breeding operations. The young Franz was not only a farmer and livestock breeder but he also enjoyed music and social life. In 1927-1928 Franz was required to serve in the Czechoslovakian army in the town of Komorn in Slovakia on the Danube River. In 1941, he was forced into the German army and in 1942, he was wounded and allowed to return to his home in Metzling. His wounded right hand was healing quickly when he received a disturbing order from the military: either return to the German occupation forces near the Eastern front (Poland or Russia) or take over the management of a 160 acre government farm in the village of Katusitz near Jungbunzlau about 38 miles north of Prague (Near the Polish border, a long way from Metzling). Franz decided to run the government farm. His father, Georg, was still very active at that time and he continued the operation of the farm in Metzling in the Franz's absence.

Naturally, Franz was not only a very successful stock breeder and farmer but also an active

participant in many farming and breeding organizations. He also thrilled his friends with his trombone playing. In July, 1937, Franz married Anna Lehanka (born 1914) from Sirb von Mastahof; but she died unexpectedly in April, 1939, without any children. Franz married his second wife on 4/24/1940, she is Maria Rubey (no relation) whose home was on the Neubauernhof in Metzling. Her father was mayor of Metzling from 1913 till the Czech communists drove them out in 1945. This marriage produced two children: Franz Rubey (II) born 8/7/1940. [He and his wife Edeltraud now operate the resort farm "Gut Minihof" in Bavaria. He is very active in the horse breeding and training of show horses in addition to the operation of his horse riding school, horse boarding service, hotel, restaurant and disco. He has been a minister in the Agriculture Department of the State of Bavaria. They have three children.]

Helga Rubey-Tauscher born 7/3/1942. [She and her husband, Helmut Tauscher, live in Landsberg about 15 miles from "Gut Minihof". They own and operate a beauty and cosmetics shop, a large store carrying everything needed for babies and a toy store. They have two children. The mother Maria Rubey lives with both Franz and Helga. I had a very delightful visit with these relatives in 1988.]

Unfortunately Franz and his young family were not allowed to stay even one generation on their farm Peternhof in Metzling. At the end of the Second World War they, along with all other German-speaking people living in the Sudetenland -3.5 million- had to leave their homes. The Czech communists who took over after the war decided to expel all German-speaking people. They robbed and plundered what they wanted and anyone offering refusal or resistance was subject to be shot. Under the threat of death, all German-speaking people were expelled from their homes and farms across the border into Bavaria or Austria. They had time to take only the personal belongings they could carry.

Franz's two sisters both married before the end of the Second World War. Maria worked as an administrator in the regional agriculture office in Bischofteinitz (a medium sized city about 10 miles east of Metzling and Wasserau, now called Horsovsky Tyn) and she married a soldier who had been severely wounded in the war and had to have one leg amputated. The man she married on

4/6/1942, is Johann Grobner (born 1/18/1915) from Trohatin. (Trohatin is a large town half way between Metzling and Wasserau.) His training was in agriculture and he eventually became director of the agricultural vocational school in Blaibach, Bavaria (West Germany) where they have lived since being driven out of their homes in Metzling and Trohatin by the Czechs in 1945.

[Translators note: Johann Grobner is the author of this history. He and his wife, Maria still live in Blaibach (8491 Kirchbichlweg 4). They have a daughter, Ingrid, living with her Husband, Karl Rohrl and their children in nearby Kosting (Hauser Muhlberg 21), Bavaria (8493 West Germany). Karl and Ingrid are both teachers in the local school. Their daughter, Isabella, is a medical student in Nurnberg; son Alex studies physics; and the youngest, Armin is interested in computer science. I had the pleasure of visiting these very well educated, intelligent and sociable relatives in 1988.]

Franz's other sister (and the sister of Maria described above) is Barbara who was an elementary school teacher beginning in Schmolau near Bischofteinitz in Bohemia in 1944. During this time she often visited her brother Franz who, as described above, was forced to operate a large farm near the Polish border for the Germans. Here she met Siegfried Radmacher who had a farm of 99 acres and was to become her husband later in Metzling on 5/29/1945. Just then the war was ending, the control by the German occupation army crumbled and Franz, Siegfried and Maria were no longer protected from the Czech communists. They fled to Metzling in a horse-drawn wagon loaded with all their possessions. As they arrived in Metzling and were preparing to move on to safety, they were overtaken by the Czech communists, robbed of all their possessions and taken in custody to Taus (now Domaslice) and later to the regional court in Pilsen. Just after Franz, Barbara and her husband-to-be Siegfried Radmacher arrived in Metzling in the spring of 1945, their brother-in-law, Johann Grobner, advised them to continue at least as far as Trohatin in order to be safe from the communists. But they did not take this advice probably because they were still in a carefree mood because of Barbara's and Siegfried's marriage. As was described above, Franz was taken into custody to be held in the

military barracks in Taus and then to be taken to Pilsen later. In Pilsen a tribunal existed that would decide what was to happen to people who might not fit into the new communist order. In addition, all of their possessions were confiscated by the Czech communist gangs. They were exactly like the robber knights of centuries ago. In the barracks in Taus Franz met a man he knew from Metzling who whispered in Franz's ear that very bad things were happening to people brought here and that he should escape at the earliest opportunity. Franz took this warning seriously and he was able to escape under the protection of this man who, of course, saved Franz's life. The man's name is Franz Holley, a Czech who lived in Metzling and worked on the railroad.

After his escape, Franz made his way cross-country in the direction of Metzling. He felt he did not understand the world anymore. On the way he saw many instances of how the Czech communists were entering the villages and homes of German speaking people, stealing all of their possessions and hauling them off to their own villages where their robberies were joyfully received. One must ask oneself what could these Czechs have been feeling when they decided it was proper to rob 3.5 million defenseless Bohemians just because they were German-speaking. It must be stated that many Czechs did not agree with the communists but the more reasonable Czechs no longer had anything to say as to how the communists were going to run the country after the war. Most Czechs were not receiving much better treatment from the communists. And the American occupation troops did nothing to prevent this cruel behavior on the part of the Czechs. All of these inhuman treatments, at the end of the war and through 1946, were not widely reported to the rest of the world. Because of their humiliation following the war, the German people had nothing to say about their fate and even today, they have little influence over their lives.

Only those who have lost everything know how much was suffered by the German-speaking people of the Sudetenland.

So we have not wanted anything more to do with the Czechs for the rest of our lives. Where so many German speaking people were taken and what they had to go through before their deaths no man knows.

After his escape, Franz appeared one night in Metzling, bathed in sweat, peaking out of the woods like a deer at his farm and family. He was still frightened by his escape from Taus and did not know what happened to his sister Barbara and her husband Seigfried. He told his parents and wife all that happened. They came to the conclusion that those who can must save themselves before the Czech mobs return to execute the rest of the German speaking people. German speaking people were being tortured and beaten to death. One place where people were taken was the prison at Craslowic near Taus. Many of our people were taken there, men and women, and no one ever saw them again. These lost people have set my opinion of the Czechs because the Czechs tortured and beat to death so many people, who did not threaten anyone, just because they were German-speaking people.

Already on June 6, 1945, only a short time after the terrible experience and escape from Taus, Franz felt he had to leave his home in order to save his life. Walking by night, he came first to his sister's home in Trohatin and from there headed for the Bavarian border at Steinlohe. Near Steinlohe he met an old friend, Girgl Rikauer, from before the time of Hitler, a friend who was involved in the smuggling activities between Bohemia and Bavaria in the past. Two weeks later Franz's wife Maria also had to leave their farm home Peternhof in Metzling because a Czech family arrived to claim it. This family had been given title to the farm and arrived armed to the teeth in case they had to take the farm by force. But the Rubey family and the other German-speaking people were not prepared to fight and did not have the energy to resist the theft of their homes. The war had been lost by the Germans and for us German-speaking people of Bohemia, it meant we too were to be driven out of our homes. Franz and Maria and their two young children (Franz II and Helga) met at Rikauer's house in Steinlohe and stayed there for three months. People, at this time, had to live and get by anyway they could. All transportation of food had to pass through Trohatin and, although I had only one leg (remember, Johann Grobner is writing this), I had to go by horse and wagon across the Bavarian border to bring in our supplies. It was still safe to travel through the forest to the west because the Czech communists had not yet been able to secure the

border area.

1945 was a year of destiny for all German-speaking Bohemians in the Sudetenland. We lost everything we had and the Czechs took it all. But, we know today, 1985, that this robbery did not lead to happiness and success for the Czechs. God's mills will grind completely - although sometimes very slowly.

In Steinlohe, Franz and Maria Rubey listened daily to the radio for information. But, as soon as the American occupation army crossed into Bohemia, the Czechs required all radios to be turned in. Now it was no longer possible for people to know what the Czechs were doing or planning to do. Everyday more people crossed the border into Bavaria; living conditions were becoming very difficult and crowded as more and more friends and relatives arrived. For three months Franz searched for housing for his family and finally found a place with the Liegl family who lived right on the main street in the Bavarian border village of Treffelstein. But Franz could not rest and vegetate any more, he had to get out in the fresh air. So, he found an old bike, and with this "wire mule" he headed in the direction of Straubing to look for work. After several days, he found a farmer in Riedling near Straubing who would allow Franz and his whole family to move to a farm in the village of Daibersdorf. This village is on the Isar River in the Gottfrieding region. There Franz worked a 99 acre farm for one month until the owner, according to their agreement, was able to reclaim it. Franz had to leave Daibersdorf and found work on a 25 acre farm in Niederviehabach. By late summer of 1947, Franz, and a friend from Metzling, Josef Grobner, rented a 420 acre farm called Gut Rosenau near the village of Dingolfing. This farm was sold in 1949, and Franz and his family had to leave. But, during the period both Franz and his friend were able to save enough so that they could each rent a farm of their own.

Franz rented another farm (506 acres) in Tintenhausen near Freising and by 1951 this farm was sold and he had to find another place. This time, after a long search, but now with an auto, he found a farm to rent near Entraching on the Ammersee (large lake just south of Munich) in Upper Bavaria. The farm was (and is) called Gut Minihof and consisted of 205 acres. In 1954, this farm was offered for sale and Franz was able to buy

half of it at that time including the house and the farm buildings. So, once again, Franz had his own home for Maria and his family. It was ten years since he had his own farm land under his feet, no more moving around from place to place. He built his farm into a dairy farm with 62 milk cows and often had agriculture students assigned to him for practical training. Local people and people from other countries became his friends and students.

Franz was 47 years old before he was able to buy Gut Minihof and he operated it alone for eleven more years. But the war years and the aftermath and then all the hard work building up the new farm had drained Franz's energy and health. So it was turned over to his son Franz II (born 8/7/1940 in Metzling #5) who took over the farm with great energy. Soon a new house was built because the old house was not suitable for remodeling and was not big enough for two families. In 1971, a Pension was built onto the house (with restaurant and disco) and Franz II and his wife, Edeltraud organized and operated a Farm Resort and Riding School. This is in operation today.

On 12/12/1984, the time for Franz Rubey was over at age 77 years. In the company of a very large group of friends and business associates, he was laid to rest in Entraching.

"Sein Leben war Arbeit und Sorge für die Seinen."

## **Epilogue: A Youthful Quest Continued**

by Robert Paulson

**Ed. Note: In Vol. V, No. 2, the June 1994 edition of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter, Bob Paulson, the founder of this society narrates the story of his long search for his "Roots" that brought him to the ruins of the village of Neubäu in the foothills of the Böhmerwald. The story continues in the summer of 1995.**

Shortly after I returned home from my visit to my "Heimatland" in June of 1993 I received an exciting letter from my cousin Hilde Wörhlin from Germany. She wrote me that a beautiful wrought iron field-cross had been found in a grove of trees by three young girls tending cows in the pastures of House #16, Vogelhaus, the home of my great grandfather. This cross was then taken to Germany

and refurbished and was to be the centerpiece of a memorial to be erected in June 1995 on the site of the Chapel of St. George in Neubäu. She said that delicate negotiations had been going on with the Czech authorities and the mayor of the neighboring village of Waier to erect this memorial, because there was still a very technical question about the land ownership in this area. The displaced Germans had been compensated for their losses by the German government after the war, but there never had been a legal transfer of the land to the Czech government. The problem was circumvented because the memorial would be erected on Church land. She concluded her letter by asking if I would be able to come and represent the family of my great grandfather George Rewitzer at the dedication ceremonies in 1995. The villagers of Neubäu wanted the "American" to be with them on this great day. I quickly answered her letter and told her that I would be very honored to come.

The day of our journey dawned bright and sunny as we all gathered at the Festhalle in Furth im Wald. We formed our large caravan of cars behind a large tour bus for the trip to Neubäu. We crossed the border without incident, in fact all we had to do was wave our Passport, no different than crossing into Austria. After about forty five minutes, we began to drive on the very road where my wife, my mother and I had been arrested in our attempt to reach Neubäu in 1978, before the Iron Curtain had been lifted. The memories of that day came back to me in a rush. In fact, the caravan stopped within a few hundred yards of the exact spot of our arrest. We had been that close to our goal in 1978.

Neubäu is located at the crest of the Neubäuer Höhe, a height of land rising several hundred meters above the Radbusa river valley. The village is two kilometers, about 1.6 miles off the main north-south road near the border with Bavaria.

The journey to Neubäu is by way of a washed out, rock encrusted road that first crosses the tiny brook that is the beginning of the Radbusa river. Then slowly winds its way amidst hardwood forests, though fenced meadows and crop land to the crest of a large hill. From this place one can look out and see the beautiful surrounding Böhmerwald, the Bohemian Forest. A sign in Czech and German, **Novosedly, Neubäu**, points up the hill.

It was an inspiring sight to see the great number of people gathering for their pilgrimage up to Neubäu. There were babies and toddlers who would be told some years hence, that they had been to Neubäu on this special day. There were teenagers who were to see the site of the village for the first time and whose parents had shared their many memories with them. They were to find their roots for the first time. There were those in their late fifties and early sixties who were pondering their many fond memories of their childhoods in Neubäu. And there were old folks walking proudly up the hill with the help of canes and walking sticks who, on this day, were reliving all the pleasant memories of their years in their beloved village, and who again were tasting the bitterness of being torn from their beloved ancestral homes. I was very moved by the sight of the nearly one hundred people slowly making their way up the winding road to Neubäu. I was very proud to be one of them. I felt the real presence of my great grandfather George Rewitzer with me.

After a strenuous climb of about a half hour or so we came to the ruins of the proud little village of Neubäu. On either side of the road, in groves of trees, one could make out the remains of what was once were cozy farmsteads. The piles of moss covered stone marked the walls of small homes and barns. This was all that was left of a village that had been home for hundreds of years to an honest hard working and God loving people. We passed the ruins of the fire hall with its fire pond. We passed the remains of the school where a group of townsfolk were gathered telling stories of their school days long ago.

We continued up the winding road to the far north eastern corner of the village where my cousin Hilde took me aside and showed me the farmstead from which my great-grandfather emigrated in 1869, over one hundred twenty-five years ago. Standing proudly guarding the farm were the two gate posts with their now rusted hand forged hinges. A row of moss coved stones marked the limits of the small house and barn and, off in the corner, stood another pile of stones that was once a small hay shed. That was all there was left. The sum total of years of work by countless generations of Rewitzers. What a tragedy!! Why?? A question repeated thousands of times in this world of unanswered questions.

After I spent some reflective moments, I was proudly shown the Rewitzer spring that joyfully bubbled out from some rocks on a nearby hill. I had finally found the source of the Rewitzer family. I was told that the spring could always be counted on for fresh, clear water even in the driest of years. I reached down and took some of the cool water and washed my face. The feel of the cool water began to refresh my spirits. We reluctantly left the Rewitzer farmstead and proceeded another fifty yards or so up to the summit of the hill where once stood the Chapel of St. George. My great grandfather had sent several thousand dollars to help pay for the construction of this chapel. The villagers had asked him to come to Neubäu for the dedication ceremonies, but he said that he was already too old for such a strenuous journey. Now, over eighty years later, I had the privilege to represent the Rewitzer family at the dedication of this memorial.

On this promontory overlooking the beautiful Böhmerwald, shining proudly, stood a splendidly crafted wrought iron cross mounted on a stone base. On the cross itself was the inscription "To the memory of the Church of St. Georg, Neubäu 1911-1950". On the base was attached a ceramic plaque with a picture of the little chapel, the same picture that I had seen so many years before at my grandmother's house in New Ulm. The memorial itself was set on a platform made of stones taken from the ruins of the chapel. Surrounding the memorial were placed beautiful displays of wild flowers. It was truly a magnificent memorial.

Already gathered at the site were the many pilgrims who had labored up the hill. An altar covered with a hand made lace altar cloth had been set up. On the altar two large candles stood flickering in the "Böhmische Wind" which continued to blow quietly. The dedication ceremony began with a hymn sung with appropriate reverence by all. Presiding at the blessing were a Czech and a German priest. The Czech priest was the pastor of the parish of Ronsperg. He gave me a nod of recognition for it was this same priest who had welcomed our German-Bohemian Heritage tour group to our "beautiful homeland" in 1991 and had said Mass for us at Berg in the very church in which my great grandfather Helget had worshipped. Special guests of honor were the Czech mayor of Waier and the "American", the great-grandson of George

Rewitzer, - Me.

Speeches were given by Erich Gaag, the Neubäu Ortsbetreuer (town leader), and Hanna Fabian, the person most instrumental in erecting the monument. I was also asked to say a few words. I presented a short talk in German where I pointed out that one hundred and twenty five years ago my forefathers were forced to leave their beloved village for economic reasons and fifty years ago the people assembled here were forced to leave their homes for political reasons. Both groups brought with them the same cultural legacy which made it possible for them to prosper in the new homes. This legacy is the bond that joins all of us together as one people, proud German-Bohemians.

After the memorial was blessed, Franz and Gretel, a well known folk duo, sang "How Great Thou Art". The words seemed particularly appropriate for this day. As we concluded the ceremony by singing "Tief im Böhmerwald" we could hear thunder in the distance echoing from the hills. The wind also began to pick up. It began to change from a gentle warm breeze into strong gusts from the north. Rain began to fall, slowly at first but quickly changing to a steady downpour. Umbrellas mysteriously appeared and everyone began to make the long and difficult journey down the winding road in the heavy rain. Footing was particularly hazardous. The rocks, and grass became very slippery. A small river began flowing down the winding road. Everyone was soaked. Lightning flashed. Thunder boomed. Several four-wheeled vehicles, driven by Czech policemen, came up the the hill to assist the elderly.

As we finally approached the bottom of the hill, we had to cross a large open field. Suddenly a large lightning bolt lit the sky followed by a deafening crash of thunder. We were terrified!! Then I began to smile. It was just my great-grandfather George Rewitzer saying "good bye" or better still "Auf Wiedersehn", 'till we meet again.

## 1996 FEEFHS Convention to Feature Many Germanic Topics

by Ed Brandt

Germanic genealogists will be able to enjoy a royal feast at the International Convention of the Federation of East European Family History

Societies (FEEFHS), rescheduled for the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center, 2201 East 78th St. at I-494 and 24th Avenue. A total of 110 program hours are planned (and more than 85 confirmed), with seven simultaneous presentations beginning at 12:30 PM on Sunday, June 9; five simultaneous presentations on Monday and Tuesday; and ending with the Tuesday, June 11, banquet. On Wednesday, registrants can visit four or five local genealogical resource centers (including Concordia College) for browsing or serious research. Individual research may also be possible on Saturday, June 8, but there will be no browsing tour.

Ethnic tours of St. Paul (Tour A) and Minneapolis (Tour B), with lunch at Kramarczuk's and ethnic dinner and entertainment at the (Gasthof zur Gemutlichkeit, are planned for Saturday. Contact Bob Paulson (612/488-0405) for more details.

Presentations now include:

**Arlene H. Eakle** "The Miraculous Discovery of Records Previously Thought to Have Been Lost" (emphasis on Germany). Tuesday luncheon.

**LaVern J. Rippley** "The German-Bohemians and Their Unique Germanic Heritage"; "Genealogy Research in Baden"; "Genealogy Research in Silesia." **Scharlott Goettsch-Blevins**

"Research in Schleswig Holstein"; "Getting It Right: Record Your Research to Save Time, Money and Anxiety." **Myron Gruenwald** "Baltic Sea

Germans; The Persistent Pioneers." **Charles Hall** "What Genealogists Can Learn from The Atlantic Bridge to Germany"; "Boundary and Name Changes." **Karen Hobbs** "Genealogy and More: Your Ancestors Also Had a Life" (German-Bohemian). **Edward G. Langer** "Emigration from Landskron to the Midwest" (German-Bohemian).

**Paul Makousky and Eugene Aksamit**, "Overview of the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International Library Collection" (includes many books on Germans).

**Lawrence Klippenstein** "Genealogical Resources for Mennonites: Canada, Mexico, Ukraine, Russia, etc." **Glen Linscheid**

"Mennonite Mix: New World and Olel." **Brian Lenius** "Researching Galizien Germans"; "Research in Galicia." **Miriam Hall Hansen** "The History and Genealogy of the Germans in Russia."

**Patricia Eames** "Beyond the Family: Profiling the German Russian Village" (Tuesday banquet);

"Finding Your Family at the National Archives."

**Irmgard Hein-Ellingson** "Czechs, Slovaks and Germans in the Bukovina and Volhynia." **Duncan Gardiner** "The Austro-Hungarian Empire: Research Sources and Geographical-Historical Background"; "Hunting for Ancestors in Eastern Europe: A Genealogist's Journey During the Momentous Year of 1989" (Monday banquet).

**Bruce Kahn** "What Non-Jews Can Learn from Jewish Genealogists." **William Wright** "the Ethnic Composition of the Former Austro-Hungarian Empire" (Sunday banquet). **Jan Zaleski** "Following the Paper Trail to Your Ancestral Village in Central or Eastern Europe"; "Overcoming Geographic Obstacles to Polish Research" (Monday luncheon); "Finding Records on Ancestors Who Entered the United States from Canada." **Dallas Lindgren** "Genealogical Resources of the Minnesota Historical Society Research Center." **Kent Cutkomp** "Minnesota Resources for Germanic Research." **Patricia Lowe** "LDS Resources for East and Central European Genealogical Research." **Brent Allison** "Cartographic Resources for East and Central European Genealogical Research." **Mavis Menzies** "Canadian Genealogical Resources for East European Research." **Helene Cincebeaux** "Genetic Genealogy." **Thomas Peters** "Why I Didn't Find My Ancestor's Naturalization."

**Fay Dearden** "Deciphering Gothic Records."

**Nina Jejel** "Cyrillic Script Before and After 1917." Two-hour Beginners' Workshops. Separate sessions by **Donna Cuillard and Beth Mullinax** on Sunday; possible session on Monday or Tuesday.

Also, programs on Luxembourg, Russian and Black Sea Germans, and Latin church records are expected. Additional talks and a few changes are likely. There will be Germanic presentations every day, most German-Bohemian presentations will be on Sunday, and most Germans from Russia presentations will be on Tuesday.

Isn't this convention a bonanza for \$49? One-day registration is also available: \$24 for Sunday, (hear up to six speakers); \$29 each on Monday and Tuesday (nine time slots). Luncheons, banquets and the ethnic activities on Saturday are extra.

If you might be interested in attending, send a SASE and fill out and return the Indication of Interest Form on the last page of this newsletter for the latest version of the total programs and the

Registration Form.

For any additional information about the FEEFHS Convention, you can contact: Bob Paulson (612/488-0405)

## Memorials In Memory of . . .

**Ambose Saffert**

from Eleanor Kretsch  
Paul & Janice Kretsch  
Mr. & Mrs. Dale Krueger

**William Krupplmann**

from Ruth Mowan

**Meinrad Domeier**

from Mr. & Mrs. Howard Binder

**Robert Beranek**

from Dan & Trudy Beranek

**Leo Woratschka**

from Arthur & Delores Dietz  
Paul & Janice Kretsch  
Bill & Dianne Embacher

**Dolores A. Machtemes**

from Francis & Frances Brandel

**John Eckstein**

from Ron & Karen Hanseter  
Elgar & Irene Busch  
Bernice Eckstein

**Victor Berdan**

from Bill & Dianne Embacher  
Mr. & Mrs. Dale Krueger  
Randy & Monica Wenninger

**Emmet Hoffman**

from Howard & Doreen Bleich

## 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 Böhmsche (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-Böhmsche Küche**

**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

**Special Offer**

Order the book "The Quiet Immigrants" and receive **free of charge** the G-B Immigrant Monument Book.

**Music**

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

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

**German-Bohemian Heritage Singers Dates of Performances**

**March 17, 2:30 P.M.**  
 Legion Birthday Party  
 Legion Club, New Ulm

**March 20**

Minnesota Festivals & Events Assoc.  
 Holiday Inn, New Ulm

**April 12, 8:00 P.M.**

GBHS Dance  
 Turner Hall, New Ulm

**April 13**

Festival Of Music  
 Vogel Arena, New Ulm

**July 12, 7:15 P.M.**

Heritagefest  
 Fairgrounds, New Ulm

**July 20, 1:15 & 3:45 P.M.**

Heritagefest  
 Fairgrounds, New Ulm

**August 17, 12 Noon**

GBHS Picnic  
 Herman Heights Park, New Ulm

**October 5, 3:45 P.M.**

Oktoberfest  
 Holiday Inn, New Ulm

**October 6, 2:30 P.M.**

Oktoberfest  
 Turner Hall, New Ulm

**October 13, 2:30 P.M.**

Oktoberfest  
 Turner Hall, New Ulm

**A Worthy Book, Worth its Weight In Gold**

by Louie Lindmeyer

On April 29, 1995, at our Societies 10th anniversary, a new book, German-Bohemians: The Quiet Immigrants, was unveiled. The book, written and researched by LaVern Rippley and Robert Paulson, is the only full-scale definitive English language book of its kind written about the German-Bohemian people. (Preceding this book Ken Meter and Robert Paulson published an

excellent smaller book titled **Border People: The Böhmische (German-Bohemians) in America.**

This article is for those of you who have not yet purchased a copy of this important work. I want to give you an idea of what you are missing. The book contains nine chapters titled as follows: **1. German-Bohemians: Their Origins; 2. German-Bohemians Settle in Brown County; 3. Departing from the Old Homeland - Establishing the New One; 4. The Market and Culture Center of Brown County: New Ulm A Magnet for Immigrants; 5. The Forty-Eighter Turners vs. the German-Speaking Bohemians; 6. The Folklore of German-Bohemians: In the Old Homeland - Transfer to Brown County; 7. German-Bohemians in the World of Work: Economic and Sociological Perspectives; 8. The Music of the German-Bohemians; 9. The German-Bohemians and National Events.**

One of my favorite chapters is chapter six - **The Folklore of German-Bohemians**. Here is an excerpt: *“Every social club or work organization was expected to stage a dance: the firemen, veterans, hunters, wood cutters, sometimes even the more cavalier clubs like the “hobos” and “goof-offs.” A competition held sway with each organization trying to outdo the other with colorful decorations, special dance orchestras, or excellently performed folk dances. To keep people mindful of the event, tickets were printed, distributed door-to-door, and displayed traditionally at home in a saint’s picture corner where everyone saw them readily and would not forget to attend. Frequently a lottery was staged at midnight so all guests would be inclined to remain in attendance. The wood choppers ball was always a specialty. Pine branches decked the hall, colorful lanterns glowed on the walls, silhouettes of woodcutters shone in the windows, and the choppers sometimes staged a special show in the middle of the dance floor, figuratively hacking away to the tune of a wood chopper’s march or polka.”*

*“All of these activities actually belonged to Fasching, known in the local dialect as “Fosnatnarren” (Pre-Lenten foolishness). Troops of masked young men and women appeared at the different balls where guests tried to conjecture*

*their identity, if possible by getting them to talk or laugh at all manner of jokes, practical or spoken, but usually without success. Only unmarried villagers participated.”*

If you are an avid researcher, or just have a passing interest in the German-Bohemian culture and heritage, this book is for you. **German-Bohemians - The Quiet Immigrants** is the type of book you will want to pass on to your children and grand-children. The book also makes an excellent gift. A gift that will last a lifetime. As a testament, so far over seven hundred copies of **German-Bohemians - The Quiet Immigrants** have been sold. Don't be the only family without one.

The hardcover book has 279 pages, over 150 photographs, many maps and charts, hundreds of family names, and its fully indexed. If you wish to purchase a copy see “History For Sale” elsewhere in this publication. Thank You!

## Computer Corner

by Paula Goblirsch

### Choosing the Right Genealogy Software

If you have a Macintosh or PC-compatible computer you can enter your genealogy data in and print out nice, neat, easy-to-read charts. You just need the right software program.

How do you choose a genealogy software program? The same way you choose any software for your computer. First, you need to know what kind of computer you have. Some programs only run on Macs or PCs. Some PC programs only run under DOS or Windows. Then you should know the version of the operating system you are using (Mac System 7, DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1, or Windows 95, etc.), the amount of RAM memory you have, and the amount of free hard disk space.

You also need to decide how much money you want to spend. Some genealogy programs are available as shareware from the Internet. This means if you have an access to the Internet, you can “download” or copy the program to your

computer and use it for a small fee (under \$15) or for free. Other genealogy programs range in price from around \$30 to just over \$100. They can be purchased directly from the vendor, in local computer stores, or from computer catalogs.

Finally, you must decide what features you want the program to have. Some features you might want to look for are:

- What is the maximum number of individuals the program will handle?
- Does the program have places for events as well as names and dates?
- What kind of notes feature does the program have?
- What output formats does the program use?
- Can charts be viewed on screen before printing?
- Can scanned photos be placed in the program?

You probably won't find a genealogy program that has all of the features you want, so decide which ones are the most important.

One feature that the program you choose must have is to be able to import and export GEDCOM (GEnealogical Data COmmunications) files. GEDCOM is a standard import/export format that allows transfer of information between different programs. This makes it easy to share data with people who use other programs or to "upgrade" to a different genealogy program later.

Some additional things that you might want to be concerned about, especially if you are a beginner, are:

- Is the program easy to use?
- Does the program have a good help feature or manual?
- Is technical support available from the vendor?

Below is a list of a few of the many genealogy programs that are available:

#### **Macintosh:**

Family Events  
Mac Roots  
Personal Ancestral File (PAF)  
Reunion

#### **DOS:**

Brothers Keeper  
Personal Ancestral File (PAF)  
Roots

The Master Genealogist (TMG)

#### **Windows:**

Brothers Keeper  
Reunion  
Roots/Visual Roots

So how do you make that final decision? Ask friends or acquaintances what genealogy software they are using. Contact a computer genealogy users group (the Minnesota Genealogy Society has one). Read computer magazines (Mac World June 1995 and MacUser January 1996) or genealogy publications (Genealogical Computing) for software reviews. If you, or a friend or relative, has access to the Internet, check out the World-Wide Web for information. You can access my home page for links to computer genealogy information. The address is <http://pmg.micro.umn.edu/genealogy.html> (no period at the end).

## **Our Readers Write**

...I really enjoy the newsletter, especially articles on the towns in Bohemia and stories about the lifestyle, daily activities, food, weather, religion etc., of our ancestors. My grandparents came from Wottoa and I hope someday to see info in the newsletter about it.

My hat is off to those of you who formed the society and worked so hard to raise the money for the Bronze Statue.

I hope that someone will video the Bischofteinitz area and perhaps sell the video through the society.

So as I said before, I thank you for the stories about Bohemia. It makes me feel closer to my grandparents who are both gone now. Keep up the good work.

Marilyn K. Hall  
Glendora, CA.

#### **Behind The Scenes Work**

In your last newsletter there was an article stating what a terrific job that was being done by administration in getting so many new members

and from places far away. I am not saying you are not doing a good job, but I believe credit should be given where credit is due.

Over one year ago I sent my cousin Karen Olson of Blaine, MN., my used newsletters. Since our family Schnobrich of New Ulm and Arlington (MN) are part of our research she became interested. She put the name, address, and information about the (GBHS) on the Internet. She got the point across to people all over the world. Also our family in various states have signed up.

So I think she deserves the credit for many new members across the country. Also we send our used newsletters to others who might have an interest in New Ulm history.

Elizabeth J. Nuffer  
West St. Paul, MN.

Ed. Thank you Elizabeth. I also thinks she deserves credit for spreading the word! I am glad you wrote to let us know of Karen's behind the scenes work.

And Karen, we appreciate your efforts in furthering the cause of the GBHS. Its people like you that make our society what it is. Thanks again!

## Queries

This space is provided to anyone who needs help finding his/her ancestors. Many of our readers have done extensive research on their families, and since many of our families are related, we can be of help to each other. This column is free of charge to anyone searching their German-Bohemian ancestors. Just write us at our P.O. box or E-mail us via the internet.

**Searching for:**

**Wenzel Hiersche**  
b. 1796 Hirschberg, Bohemia  
d. 12 July 1871, Elwood, Iowa  
son of Joseph & Theckla

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

**(Itterheim) Hiersche of Hirschberg,  
Bohemia**

If you have any information on this person or the Hiersche family please contact:

Elizabeth Staman  
Colorado Springs, CO

## Email Us

The GBHS has entered the 21st century with a new computer and software that enables us to communicate with other computers via the Internet. If you wish to e-mail us our address is:

For newsletter or society information contact Louis Lindmeyer at e-mail address:

**LALGBHS@aol.com**

For research information contact Robert Paulson at e-mail address:

**RPaulGBHS@aol.com**

## Coming Next Issue

- Vorn Hutzengehen
- Wasser Für Latschin
- Landskron
- The St. Martin's Goose
- The Internet And The GBHS

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56073-0822

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**Indication of Interest in 1996 FEEFHS Convention**  
**Minneapolis, MN, June 9-12, 1996**

If there is a reasonable chance that you might attend the 1996 FEEFHS convention, please fill out and mail it to the FEEFHS Program Chairperson, P.O. Box 624, South St. Paul, MN 55075-0624 as soon as possible to facilitate convention planning.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic or religious identity of ancestors (list all) \_\_\_\_\_

Names of countries of origin, according to present boundaries \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to speak, recognizing that cannot guarantee reimbursement of expenses? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you recommend a speaker you would especially like to hear? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, please list name and address (and phone number, if available) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

