



German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter

the

Heimatbrief

P.O. Box 822

New Ulm, Minnesota, 56073-0822

Email: Society & Newsletter - lal@mnhc.net



Research Info - rpaulgb@pioneerplanet.infi.net

Vol X No. 1 March 1999 Louis Lindmeyer, Editor



Coming Events

March 20, 1999

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

April 18, 1999

**GBHS Spring Dance
1 p.m. Turner Hall, New Ulm, MN**

April 22 - 25, 1999
German-American Studies Conference
Holiday Inn, New Ulm, MN

May 22, 1999
Spring General Meeting
9 a.m. New Ulm Public Library

August 14, 1999
GBHS Annual Picnic
11 a.m. Herman Heights Park



New Ulm, MN

The German-Bohemia n Roots of Anton Gag

Unearthed

by Julie L'Enfant

I first learned of the existence of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society by mistake--my own mistake, about the background of Wanda Gag (1893-1946), the Minnesota printmaker and author of children's books, including the perennially popular Millions of Cats. In 1996 Richard W. Cox and I had collaborated on an article on Wanda Gag for Minnesota History, in which we referred to the "Slavic and Bohemian" folktales that formed an important part of her childhood. In another article that same year for a volume on prints published by Tamarind Press, we referred to the "Bohemian-Hungarian community of New Ulm." After the articles were published, I learned that certain people were quite perturbed at this misapprehension about the true origins of Wanda Gag!

I was puzzled at first: to me, the terms "Bohemian," "Slavic," and "Czech" were more or less synonymous. I had the vague idea that Wanda Gag was Czech: when she was a successful artist in New York in the 1930s, she liked to wear embroidered peasant blouses of the sort popularly associated with Czechoslovakia. And then

there was the matter of her name: I knew that she had added the diacritical mark so that people in New York would pronounce it with a long a instead of a short one. This mark looked very much like the Czech rka. In any case, the issue of the exact birthplace of her father, Anton Gag, also an artist, seemed rather remote from the topic under consideration in our texts.

Yet when I got a phone call from one Bob Paulson, who identified himself as the founder of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society, I was very interested in meeting him. For one thing, I gathered that this Mr. Paulson was a representative of those who were bothered by inaccuracies in the articles. But he also had another reason to want to get together: he had been investigating Anton Gag in the homeland, where he had uncovered some interesting new information about where he was born. By that time I had embarked on research of my own on Anton Gag, who was known mainly as a history painter--one of the artists who did a series of panoramic paintings on the 1862 Battle of New Ulm, as well as the painting called The Battle of New Ulm that hangs in the Minnesota State Capitol today--but who had also done many other kinds of work that deserved to be more widely known.

At our first meeting Bob presented me with a copy of German-Bohemians: The Quiet Immigrants, a fine book written by Professor La Vern J. Rippley and himself. He

also gave me photocopies of extensive records about the Gag family and where they came from. That day through documents and maps I began to learn about the German-Bohemians. Bob had obtained Anton Gag's birth records from archives in Pilsen (Czech name: Plzen). They establish that Anton was born in a tiny town called Walk rather than Neustadtl bei Haid, as had been commonly believed; furthermore, they show the year of his birth to be 1858 rather than 1859, as has been reported. (Anton himself entered 1859 as his birthdate on certain documents.) Other papers established that Anton's father George Gag (spelled "Gaag" in Bohemia) was a skilled carpenter and yet a landless peasant. A year or so later Bob would return to Germany and Austria, visiting Walk and other sites connected with Anton's youth. The Gags' house no longer exists, but Bob found out where it had stood. He made numerous photographs that show the striking resemblance between the district of Tachau and the land around New Ulm.

With these and other documents, we can now trace the movement of the Gaags from Bohemia to Minnesota. Anton's oldest sister, Anna Gag, was the first to come: in 1870 she began work as a domestic in Cottonwood Township, near New Ulm. Three years later George and Theresia Gag arrived in St. Paul with three other children--Margaretha, who was married to Vincenz Klaus; Joseph; and Anton. By 1876 most of the family was living and working in New Ulm, a town with a substantial German-Bohemian population. Theresia was living with Anna, by this time married to Joseph Sellner; George was apparently elsewhere, looking for work. As we now know, Anton did not make his way to New Ulm until about 1880. From the age of 14 to about 19, this attractive young man, who was, by all accounts, intelligent, artistic, and high-strung, lived with his brother Joseph in St. Paul. Margaretha and Vincenz Klaus lived with them until 1876 while Vincenz worked at a nearby brewery. St. Paul was still a fairly new city, having been founded in the 1840s. The city's census records and city directories reveal that the two young men lived in cheap quarters on the Upper Levee, a notorious area near the Mississippi River crowded with saloons and what were euphemistically called "Ladies' Boarding Houses." The fact that Anton spent several formative years in this raw, boisterous environment--the subject of repeated editorials in the Pioneer Press calling for decorum and decency--has opened up interesting avenues for research. We know that his background was more urban, even cosmopolitan, than previously understood. The Upper Levee was only a few blocks from Seven Corners, a center of commerce in the bustling new city, and, in another direction, a short walk from Irvine Park, where the city's most substantial citizens lived. It is interesting that Anton was in St. Paul when the German Catholic Church of the Assumption on Seventh Street was being built. Since he lived just a few blocks from the site, he certainly was aware of the construction of this magnificent structure, which was a copy of a Romanesque church in Munich, Germany and which may have stimulated his interest in church architecture and decoration. The records also present some mysteries. What, for instance, happened to Joseph Gag? Bob has found records of his marriage in April 1881 and the birth of his son Joseph in February 1882; but in the following year the city directory lists his wife Mary as a "widow." Yet no record for the death or burial of Joseph has yet been found in St. Paul or New Ulm.

One of the most intriguing items of information in census records is the designation one year of Anton Gag as artist. Thus we know that even as a teenager Anton had artistic aspirations. When he joined his mother Theresia and the rest of the family in New Ulm in 1880 or thereabouts (George Gag having died in a tragic accident in 1877), Anton took further steps in this direction. He became the protege of August Schell, founder of the Schell Brewery and leading member of the Turnverein, the German fraternal organization that constituted the town's social elite. German-Bohemians: The Quiet Immigrants stresses the social gulf between the Turners and the German-Bohemians in those days: the Turners were the town's business and social leaders; the German-Bohemians, on the other hand, were poor farmers and artisans, generally keeping to themselves and having little interest in assimilating. Yet Anton was quite successful in this German milieu: he showed so much promise as an artist that August Schell sent him to art school, first in Chicago and then in Milwaukee. In 1886, Anton married Ida Berndt, the daughter of Julius Berndt, another member of Schell's circle of cultured 'pioneers'.

By this time Anton Gag was a respected artist in New Ulm. Like many another 19th-century artist in America and Europe, he maintained a photographic studio for dependable income. He also painted portraits, still lifes, landscapes, and genre scenes--the gamut of academic genres. Perhaps, with his wife's social connections, the hard-working Anton was on the way to

becoming a leading citizen of New Ulm, but only thirteen months after their wedding Ida Gag died; an infant daughter died the following month. There followed a period of intense depression for Anton, during which he may well have painted a series of small undated landscapes reminiscent of the homeland.

Six years later, in 1892, Anton married Lissi Biebl, a vivacious young woman of German-Bohemian stock very like his own. (The Biebls came from Kscheutz, Bohemia [K_ire] only 30 miles from Walk.) The household founded by Anton and Lissi Gag has been well documented, as in *Growing Pains* (1940), an autobiography by their daughter Wanda, and *Wanda Gag: The Story of an Artist* (1949), by Alma Scott, Wanda's childhood friend, as well as Karen Nelson Hoyle's more recent *Wanda Gag* (1994), which examines the children's books. These sources stress how important the German-Bohemian tradition was to Wanda's childhood. The family spoke B misch at home and heard Bohemian folk songs and tales. (Bob Paulson and Karen Hobbs have just published a volume of these tales. Just looking through them shows how powerfully they influenced Wanda's work!) Anton's work was also profoundly affected by the German-Bohemian tradition. Beginning in the early 1890s he collaborated with Christopher Heller and Alexander Schwendiger on the decoration of houses and churches, using techniques that can be linked directly with those of the Old Country. Anton also did extensive work at Turner Hall, including a drop curtain and theatrical sets that evoke German Bohemia, particularly the wooded lands of the B hmerwald.

Wanda Gag described the bookshelves in her father's studio as filled with German art books and periodicals on art. And it is as a German-Bohemian artist, Bob and I have concluded, that Anton Gag should be considered. Anton has been described in our own day as a "Minnesota Impressionist," based on certain sketchy, sun-dappled landscapes he produced. Yet in the light of the new evidence Anton Gag seems not so much a provincial experimental painter as a fully-developed traditional painter, one who found his m tier by holding fast to his roots. In both life and art Anton Gag was profoundly Bohemian--in the truest sense of the word--and his Bohemianism, as I have come to understand, has nothing to do with Czech peasant costumes or artists in berets. Our research, in fact, has led to a reevaluation of Gag in an article called "A True Bohemian: Anton Gag," which is scheduled to appear in *Minnesota History* in the spring or summer of 1999. Our next project is a book for the Afton Historical Press examining the life and work of Anton, Wanda, and Flavia Gag.

New Tales Book Available

One Hundred Tales from Sudetenland translated and edited by Karen Hobbs is the only published collection of German-Bohemian folklore in English. It is a book of popular stories that German-Bohemians learned from childhood -- a collection of folktales about the heroes and saints who protected them, the spirits and sprites who tricked them, and the monsters and demons who bedeviled them. There are representative tales from the eight different regions of Bohemia and Moravia from a period when there were still knights, witches, giants, fairies, water spirits, dwarves and dragons -- all of whom had an effect on the daily lives of peasants and city-dwellers alike. The tales in the book include some that tell of real historic events as well as some that add magic to reality or speak of God's retribution for man's evil ways.

...these tales ... with all their fantasy and magic, reflect the times the story teller lived in. Thus it is a priceless document. " (T. J. Kloberdanz, Ph.D. Folklore Anthropologist, University of North Dakota)



Soft Cover, 200 Pages, Original Illustrations, Maps, and Glossary
 Price\$12.95 tax included
 Shipping and handling..... 1.55
Total Cost \$14.00

Available from: **GBHS Publications**
P.O. Box 822
New Ulm, MN 56073-0822

Our Readers Write

Greetings

It is with pleasure that I send in my dues for 1999. All of you are to be congratulated for the dedication that you pursue what is of interest to so many

The stories about the old country are for me a glimpse in the past that I look forward to. I would encourage each of you to impress upon your children to not dismiss their heritage, there will come a time when they get older that much will be lost and no one to ask about where they came from. In my case my parents would have been a tremendous source of information but I too waited to long and now that resource is long gone. Without the help of others to reconstruct a family tree I would be totally lost.

Also like many others I went west after World War II, having found out there were places where you didn't have to shovel snow. Having nearly froze to death the last winter in Minnesota I decided that was enough, but by leaving I lost contact with most of my relatives. I have since tried to reacquaint myself to them and discovered that the migration of their children still continues to the four corners of the world

Best Regards
Gilbert J. Braulick

Dear Friends at the GBHS,

You asked for opinions from your members on Erich Anton Helfert's book Valley of the Shadow: After The Turmoil, My Heart Cries No More. Helfert's book helped readers to see, not just the story of one family and one ethnic groups trials, but the much larger picture of the awful ethnic cleansing of past years and what is still happening today. In some ways nothing has changed, one people hating another because they are different .

On a much smaller scale, the courage of the Helfert family was inspiring. From betrayal and murder of a family member to the cavalier theft of property and valuables to verbal indignities, this courageous family kept going from day to day, not knowing what was in store. A few years ago, I didn't know there was such a term as German-Bohemian, and I didn't know it was my grandfather's heritage - and mine. Mr. Helfert's book helped make the picture clearer for me, and it made the evacuation of an entire people after World War II a personal experience - if that is even remotely possible unless you've experienced it yourself. It must have been so difficult to write this book, to let go of the fear and open doors for others to see the pain the author experienced. How grateful I am that he did. Although my immediate ancestors were in the United States by 1870, some of their relatives were moved in 1946 and now live in Germany. I have a better idea of what they went through.

Probably the most difficult part to read about was the awful treatment of the Helfert family by Mrs. Helfert's relatives. I came away with one question foremost in my mind: Did the families ever reconcile? Then, would I be able to forgive?

Hopefully, Valley of the Shadow will be the first of many such memories by Sudeten-Germans. This event needs to be known far beyond those of us who have Sudeten-German background.

Gloria Ellwanger
San Antonio, TX 78217

Dear President Kretsch,

We have benefited from the historical content of the GBHS newsletter, and greatly enjoyed the programs included in the meetings. Therefore we would like to donate the enclosed check to help along the fine project of a research library.

Sincerely,
Phil and Lee Leonard

Queries

I am researching the family history of Leonard Bartl/Barthl from Unterheutte. He was born in 1929 and died in New Ulm, MN on August 30, 1914. Leonard had three children named Anna (Mrs. George Schroedl), John (married Theresa Zangel) and Margareta (Mrs. John Baar). The family came to America around 1889, their mother died in Unterheutte.

I would welcome any help in documenting Leonard s birth, marriage and house number. Also is anyone aware of a history that has been written about Graffenried or Unterheutte?

Thank you,
John Leonard Berg
412 S. School St.
Cuba City, WI 53087
bergjo@uwplatl.edu

Oberpfalzer, Bayerischer and German-Bohemian Translated History

Recently discovered history, and now translated into English, about the border villages of Furth-im-Wald, Vollmau, Taus, Tachau, Pfraumberg Neumark, Ceska Kubice, Eschlkam, Heiligen Blut, Dangelsried, Klopffleinried, Ferner Warzenried, Stachesried, Ritzenried, Grafenried, Kleinaign, Cham ,Kleinaign, Eschlkam, Neukirchen,Pilsen, Prag, Warzenried, Atzlern, Eisenhammer, Eisenstein, Prenath and Prant is now available. The general history of this region covers a time period from the 6th Century AD to 1989 and is good background information with many family names mentioned. Included in the package are the original German documents with the English translation. A map of the researched area is also included with the package. If you're interested and would like a copy of this translated history please send your \$25.00 check to:

Thomas H. Semelbauer
4786 Thistle Mill Court
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49006
Tsemelbaue@aol.com

A portion of your fee for this history will be given to the German-Bohemian Heritage Society to continue their excellent research and support of our German-Bohemian Heritage.

Contents:

1. 2000 Years of Tradition
2. Migration of peoples - 6th Century AD
3. The Old Road - 805 AD
4. Narists-Varists - 819 AD
5. Furth and Domazlice (Taus) in early times - 993 AD
6. The Choden - 1004 AD
7. First Battles in the Border Forest - 1040 AD
8. The Bavarian-Bohemian Frontier - The Settlement History Furth-im-Wald
9. The Beginnings of the City of Furth-im-Wald - 933 AD
10. The Earls of Bogen - 1242
11. The First Border Negotiations - 15th Century
12. The first traversing of the frontier - 1462

13. The Hussite Wars - 1420 to 1433
14. The desperation of the frontier dwellers - Hussite Wars
15. Encroachment of the Bohemians - 1511
16. The Work of Joerg and Wolf Pfeil - 1520
17. Additional dialog - 1551 to 1586
18. The founding of Vollmau- 1612 --- (See History of Vollmau)
19. The Frontier of 1707
20. The first Boundary-Stones - 1708
21. The great Treaty between Bavaria and Austria - 1764
22. The Rock of three Crests - 1764
23. The State Treaty of 1764
24. The "Striking" Satisfaction - 1770
25. The Frontier in Recent Times - 19th Century
26. The Expulsion - 1945
27. Iron Curtain Descended
28. Vollmau, Atrocities by the Czechs - May 13, 1945
29. The Iron Curtain Falls - 1989
30. History of Vollmau
31. Map 1 of Vollmau
32. Map 2 of Vollmau
33. Map 3 of Bayerischer Wald

Rootsweb Email

Taken from the GBHS Rootsweb Electronic Mailing List Could you elaborate on the "Heimatbach" and the source?

Heimatbucher (Heimat Books) are published by the Sudeten groups expelled from various districts in 1945. They are about the homeland district they lived in. There are two types - one is history, culture, tradition and folklore with relatively rare discussion of specific names or places and the other type maps and describes each village in the district and lists the surnames of inhabitants by house number in 1945.

The GBHS has a bibliography of all Heimat books published and someone who has access to that book may be able to tell you what the title of the book for your district is. But it is difficult to find any of these books for sale or in US libraries for inter-library loan. The Sudeten library in Stuttgart (Haus der Heimat) has a good collection of Egerland Heimatbucher and their librarians may be able to help you identify the title of the book that would include your ancestral home village. They can also tell you what it includes -- whether there are maps and lists of residents included and what kind of pictures there are. I don't know if they have Heimat books from areas outside Egerland. The librarians can handle queries in English.

I would suggest that any queries to the library should furnish a FAX number if that is possible. A dense-text one-page FAX can be cheaper than postage and FAXes from Germany are also often cheaper than international postage. Of course photos do not turn out well on FAX but sometimes they are equally poor on photocopies.

The addresses of the library are:

(1) Snail-mail:

Bibliothek im Haus der Heimat

Schlossstr. 92

D-70176 Stuttgart

Germany

(2) VOX: +49-711-66951-30 (Frau Kutschis, Frau Kadura)

FAX: +49-711-66951-49 (Haus der Heimat (in general), you should state that your fax is for the Bibliothek)

(3) E-mail: Bibliothek@hdhbw.BWL.de

All of the books are in German. But if you can get copies of the pages concerning your own village you should be able to find someone to translate for you.

I would like to add that anyone who has a translation of information found in one of these books should consider sharing it with the rest of us. Please submit your translations for publication in the GBHS newsletter or on disk for possible inclusion at

the web site.

If you do not have the whole book you cannot search it for your surnames in other villages in the district like I did.

I have a master photocopy of the MIES book and can make a copy from my copy for anyone who wants one as long as my cost to copy and mail is covered.

I also understand that the GBHS is going to - or already has - put a translation of the Waier Parish book on their web site.

There are a few old books which may/may not contain lists of surnames listed in a catalog published by Kiep Antiquariat in Germany. Many of the books are older histories or simply "books about" the city or area. But these books will often still contain surnames of people who are known for something in that community. I cannot read Czech and can't speak for the titles in Czech, only for the titles in German. Some of them are:

- 1) Auschaer Bezirkes (Auscha) (3242)
 - 2) Brandeis city (3253) Possibly not w/list of names
 - 3) Brunn addressbook including Konigsfeld, Hussowitz, Kumrowitz, etc. in 10 volumes, ... yearly 1901,03,06-14 (3258)
 - 4) Dorfteschen (Heimat memories) (3278)
 - 5) Echersdorf memories (3281)
 - 6) Eger (3282, 3283, 3284)
- The last two are about the archives of the city of Eger
- 7) Falkenau city and its vicinity in 1876 (3286)
 - 8) Gablonz The political district of, 1894 (3289)
 - 9) Gablonz The German societies, 1932 (3292)
 - 10) Joachimsthal, Chronics of 1516-1617 (3311)
 - 11) KarlsbaD, 1906 (3317)
 - 12) Tesstal, Heimat im, 1965. (3318)
 - 13) Leitmeritz, Heimatkunde des Bizirks, 1922-24 (3325)
 - 14) Liebeschiz bei Auscha, Kirchsprengis, Tschertner inc. 1912, (3326)
 - 15) Neudek, city. 1923. (3340)
 - 16) Olmutz - German settlements to 1918 (3344)
 - 17) Olmutz, city to 1918, published 1937. (3347)
 - 18) Pfraumberg, castle and city 1925,(3358)
 - 19) Monastery Emaus in Prag (3371)
 - 20) Schlukenu, Rumburg, Pfeifer 1898, (3384)
 - 21) Dinzenhofer 1900, (3385)
 - 22) Schoenhengstgau history 1975 (vol 2) (3386)
 - 23) Starckenbach, Sudeten place names in, Reichenberg 1942 (3402)
 - 24) Bruck, Heimatbuch, 1980 560 pages (3476)
 - 25) Brunn, yearbook 1941-42 (3480)
 - 26) Budweis, historic and statistical description 1862 (3486)
 - 27) Iglau, Trebitsch, Triesch, Gross-Bitesch, Gross-Meseritsch und Pirnitz ...1856, (3497)
 - 28) Gablonz, Heimatkunde Gablonz und Tannwald 1932 (3563)
 - 29) Jagerndorf und Olbersdor (Troppau) Ein Heimatbuch fur die Bezirke, 1923 (3629)
 - 30) Leitmeritz, city 700 years - 1917 (3698)
 - 31) Reichenberg, Heimatskunde des Reichenberger Bezirkes, Stadt und Land. Bohmisch Aicha und bosching. 2 volumes 1903/05 (3877)
 - 32) Chronik der Orte Seelowitz und Pohritz and vicinity Brunn 1859 (3980)
 - 33) Herrschaft Starckenbach in the Riesengebirge in the 18th C. - 1974 (4002)
 - 34) Teplitz - short history and description of mariaschein by Teplitz 1855 (4026)
 - 35) Toeplitz- a German Bohemian city history 1886 (4046)
 - 36) Trieben (not sure this is Bohemian) (4051)
 - 37) Leutschau(er) Chronik with illustrations by Fritzi Mally 1943. (4162)

If you want more information about any of these books use the catalog number in parentheses and inquire directly by FAX or letter: (English is OK)

Antiquariat und Verlag Keip GmbH
 Bayernstrasse 9
 63773 Goldbach
 FAX 01149 6021/590542
 A one-page FAX to Germany costs \$1.11-\$1.19 on MCI.
 Karen Hobbs

Eastman's Genealogy newsletter had the following review of web sites related to genealogy:

Cyndi's List at <http://www.CyndisList.com>

The home page says, "Over 38,500 links, categorized & cross-referenced, in over 90 categories." In short, this is a huge "list of genealogy links" that is maintained by Cyndi Howells. It has pointers to all sorts of genealogy information on the Web.

Other Great Genealogy Sites on the Web

Ancestry.com at <http://www.ancestry.com> - "This is the site I keep going to, because I have such a good chance of finding something in all the databases. Also, thanks to their GEDCOM databases, I've found two second cousins I didn't know existed! We've burned up our keyboards catching up on family events." -- Kathy Applebaum

Family Tree Maker at www.familytreemaker.com

"Familytreemaker is great because it give me access to all the people interested in researching the family names I am working on and others I do not know yet. I like the program and the changes over the last 3 years have helped a lot." - Alice
RootsWeb at www.rootsweb.com. The Rootsweb Surname List site has been my most fruitful way of finding cousins, information on many great grandparents and books and sources for this data. This site is easy to use and easy to understand. And there are links to other sites: for instance, surname mailing Lists, county mailing lists, archived queries on mailing lists, etc." - Shirley Webb

Correction

In the December 1998 issue of the Heimatbrief an article titled Czech Info Center appeared on page 11. The article listed a Czech web site that featured categories on history, travel, recipes, books, maps, weather, and shopping. Unfortunately the web site address was listed incorrectly. The correct web site address is: **www.muselik.com/czech/frame.html**

Threshing Grain in Littisch

Translated from an article in a 1996 Heimatbrief.

Agriculture was the primary occupation of the people living in Littisch. Most of the farms were small with the majority being 5-10 hectares and a few up to 15 hectares in size. Fieldwork and transport was accomplished exclusively with draft animals -- horses, oxen and cows. The only machinery was owned by a community cooperative with machines available for mowing and for threshing and cleaning grain as well as machines to cut straw into small pieces. The greater part of all work in the fields and meadows, farmyards and stables was done by hand. Neighbors helped neighbors and children helped, too, starting at a fairly early age.

In the fall, as soon as the grain was brought in and the harvest of beets and potatoes was finished it was time to tend to threshing. The most simple threshing machine consisted of a "Stiftendreschtrommel" (rolling threshing drum with stubby nailheads sticking out of it) with a thresh-basket (catcher) mounted on a "station" (raised platform). Some of them were still operated by some type of "G pel" (wheel turned by animals walking in a circle around it).

The harvested grain flowed through a "Gabelwurf" (chute) to the "Dreschtrommel" (threshing drum) into which an attendant had to load the "Buschelweise" (sheafs of grain). Next the "Dreschgutes" (threshed product) was shaken to separate the grain and straw. Very few grains remained in the straw that was left. Binding the loose straw into bundles with a "Strohseil" (special cord) was another laborious task.

Finally the threshed grain had to pass through a cleaning machine that included a sifting screen and a winnowing fan. This machine was operated by a hand crank and removed most of the debris and dirt from the grain. Communities like Littisch that had a threshing and winnowing machine that shook the straw from the grain and then blew the remaining debris away would send the machine from the courtyard of one farm to another to lighten the labor associated with threshing. The machines would mechanically separate the grain from the straw but the sheaves still had to be inserted, the threshed product still had to be winnowed and the straw still had to be bound by hand.

Some threshing machines had a strawpress connected to them. There were also free-standing straw presses but they only compressed the straw and the bundles still had to be tied by hand with straw cord (cord made from straw fibers). It was not until much later that threshing machines appeared on the market with mechanical strawbinders.

The make "Strohseilen" (special cord for binding straw) one needed long unbroken pieces of rye straw. This straw material was prepared with threshing flails before the introduction of threshing machines. To do so the sheaves were untied and spread out on the threshing floor in a flat layer (about 15 cm) and processed with flails swung by four people in pairs. The swung the flails slowly with a leader (Taktgeber) who set the rhythm -- usually the father. If he found fault with something he would strike the grainery wall with his flail and give his instructions.

During the winter the sounds of flails on the threshing floors throughout the village was a familiar music.

Chronicle of the Village of Muttersdorf

Muttersdorf and its Historic Development

The exact time when Muttersdorf was established cannot be determined. It is assumed that the first settlers in the area were Markomanni clans who sought to avoid the advancing Czechs in the harsh forested terrain. There are traces of an old "Wasserschloss" [water lock - perhaps a sluice gate in a dam] at the Meierhof indicate that there was an very ancient settlement there. The "Wasserschloss" remains are dated to the year 1000. It indicates that a system of dams and waterways was used to create a defensive moat with a secure placement for the locks that was named "Auf der Insel" [on the island] until the beginning of the 20th century. This designation, among other things, proves that the German language was always spoken in this area and that the original name of the place was "Insel." The Czech word for "Insel" is "Wostrow" or "Ostrow" and that is what the advancing Czechs called the place that was latter known as " Muttersdorf. Around 1180 Mutina von Bukowec, a count from the court of Prague, became the owner of our village. The name "Muttersdorf" most likely is derived from his name.

Mutina expanded and strengthened the simple fortifications then in place. The native population settled next to the now-secure island and around the location of the present Meierhof. Subsequently Mutina laid out a town on both sides of the old highway leading west to Bavaria and gave it his name -- Mutina at first and later, Mutinsdorf. This was not a typical Czech village built in a circle [Runddorf], rather a German "Reihendorf" in the style typical of Franconia and the Frankish settlers who gathered there. Mutina moved some of the earlier settlers a half hour to the west and gave the new place created there the old name, "Wostrow," which eventually became Wasserau.

The first mention of Muttersdorf is found in a gift-deed dated 1253 held by Zbraslaus de Mutin, a descendant of Mutina. The parish is mentioned for the first time in 1352.

The lords of Muttersdorf and Hostau had close family ties. Both places were often the property of one and the same lord or were divided between brothers, nephews and uncles. Both places were built according to the same layout. Two rows of houses from west to east, with narrow entrance and exits at each end and a broad market-place in the center. The romanesque churches are located on elevated sites and surrounded by the cemeteries. In both places the Meierhof is next to the Schloss [manor house or castle]. Each Schloss were formerly surrounded by moats.

A German deed found in Munich and dated 1333 mentions "Mutterstorff." The Hussite wars brought the village great suffering, plunder and destruction. An old oral tradition says that only a widow and two children survived the horrors. Near the end of the 15th century the small town of Muttersdorf became the property of the family von Wiedersperg who held it until 1857. In 1577 the von Wiederspergs gave a coat of arms to "Markt Muttersdorf" ["Markt" indicates the town had a special permit to be a central marketplace for other towns and villages in the vicinity]. It is a divided shield with the top

section showing a miner on a golden background and the lower section showing a leaping wolf against a silver ground.

After the Thirty Years War the "Markt" [town of Muttersdorf] was desolated. Many houses and farmsteads were burned out and could not be rebuilt. Abandoned farmsteads included the locations of present house numbers 33, 35, 37, 43, 48, 51, 95 and also houses 64, 74, 82, 84, 87, 97, 103 and 106.

In 1680, house number 35 was sold for the price of one English horse, a saddle and a pistol. In 1751 the Schloss [palace] was burned out by a carelessly- caused fire and was never rebuilt. A one-story building to house Meierhof personnel was built on its site and the von Wiederspergs withdrew to a mansion located on the market place. That house then became known as the Schloss.

There was unrest about Robot [compulsory labor] in Muttersdorf in 1776 and in 1800, 1801, and 1808 border disputes with the Oberpfalz had to be settled. During the war with France [Napoleonic Wars] from 1793-1815 Muttersdorf was not in the theater of war but the local Infantry Regiment, Number 35, took part in almost all of the larger campaigns and operations. The residents of Muttersdorf also had much to suffer from "Einquartierung" [housing] soldiers and requisitions of food and feed for the marching armies. Austrian and Russian armies (1800-1814) and French armies (1805-1809) marched through the area, bringing much uneasiness. A cross set up between the last brick houses and the church fountain commemorates an incident in which a Russian soldier was unjustly accused of robbing the military cash boxes and was subsequently sentenced to death by firing squad. Another soldier had stolen the money and hid it. The cross is dated 1827.

In 1850 all matters concerning political and legal rights were assigned to the circuit court in Hostau. The communities were no longer "subjects" of an overlord, rather separate and independent. From 1869 - 1926 the Count Coudenhove-Kalergi was the owner of the "Gutes Muttersdorf" [the Meierhof and agricultural land that belonged to the noble manor in the past]. The Meierhof was expropriated by the Czechs in 1926 and after that was managed by J. Muzik until 1938. In 1938 the Meierhof

was under control of an administrator and in 1945 the son of the then-deceased J. Muzik took it over. Between 1933-1945 there were a series of disastrous fires in Muttersdorf which could not be explained. In 1933 the "Miasnerhaus" number 98 burned down, in 1934 a huge fire broke out and houses number 31 (Julius Schnobrich), number 86 (Mulz) and 87 (Georg Grbner), parts of the Meierhof (formerly numbers 21 and 132) were burned to ashes and number 17, the "Herrenmühle" operated by family Schlögl, were burned to ashes. The barns of Julius Schnobrich (Nr. 31), Georg Hammerschmied (Nr. 32), Josef Sellner (Nr. 29), Karl Maier (Nr. 28) and Wenzel Honsowitz (Nr. 27) were also victims of the flames.

Fourteen days after that huge blaze another fire burned down the barn of the Hannakam family at number 95. In August, 1945, the house and barn of Josef Hartl burned to the ground.

The First World War called for the loss of 50 men, the Second World War led to 72 deaths. On May 2, 1945, Muttersdorf was occupied by American troops. The day before, three American artillery shells had struck the town. They fell on the Marter cottage and on the "Schafberg." There was little damage.

The first Czech soldiers arrived in June and by August 5, 1945, the political administration of the area was in the hands of the Czechs. On October 15 all of the former German possessions were delivered to the Czechs. On November 2, 1945, martial law was once more declared in Muttersdorf because of suspicion that there were weapons hidden there. Sixteen young boys aged 13-16 were arrested and taken to a warehouse in Taus where they remained until July, 1946.

One of them, Helmut Penkert became ill in the warehouse and died. The expulsion to of the citizens of Muttersdorf to Germany began in May of 1946.

The following is an abbreviated list of family names that resided in Muttersdorf. The names were taken from the Geschichte des Marktes und Herrschaft - Muttersdorf by Johann Micho : **Abraham, Ackerman, Arbes, Baar, Bauer, Baumann, Beck, Braun, Braunreiter, Brei, Carl, Dietl, Dietz, Dittrich, Drexler, Fischer, Fleischmann, Frank, Grau, Grbner, Grossman, Gtter, Haas, Halla, Hammerschmid, Hauser, Hausner, Held, Helget, Hoffmann, Hogen, Holm, Hartl, Kalz, Karl, Kern, Kirsch, Koch, Kolb, Kstner, Landkammer, Liebl, Lehr, Losleben, Maier, Melzer, Meier, Moldan, Mhlbauer, Mller, Neid, Neudecker, Neumann, Ott, Paa, Pcher, Pechtl, Penkert, Plass, Polta, Portner, Pregler, Prokosch, Raab, Rebitzer, Reiner, Reiniger, Riess, Richter, Roltmeier, Rubey, Saffert, Sandhner, Sellner, Simon, Schaller, Schilling, Schindler, Schmid,**

Schmidt, Schmaltz, Schneider, Schrpfer, Schwab, Schwarz, Sperl, Sp rl, Stark, Stauber, Steiner, Stengl, Sturn, Tauber, Tauer, Teis, Ubl, Ulrich, Vogl, Wartha, Weber, Weniger, Wenisch, Werner, Wiesner, Wild, Wilfert, Winter, Wirth, Wolf, Zeidler, Ziegler, Zischka, Zitzmann.

My Corner of the World

by Frank Koerner

It was November 1992. My wife Elke and I had departed Munich, Germany yesterday morning driving a rental auto. That was 600 miles ago. This morning we arrived at the town line of Benke, Moravia. I wanted to "officially" record our arrival. I halted the car and turned off its engine to take a photograph of Elke at the village's entry sign. Now relieved of the disrupting clamor of the automobile's engine, a soothing early morning calm prevailed in the valley. Without our knowing it, someone already had taken notice of us and was silently observing our chatter and actions. Just after I snapped the photo, we heard a male voice, in decidedly non-Czech accented German, echo around the valley, "Hallo. Sind Sie aus Benke?" (Hello, are you from Benke?). The question was intriguing because this town had not officially been called Benke since 1946. Because of the ricocheting echo, the location from whence the voice was emanating was not immediately obvious.

As we approached the town many thoughts had crossed my mind. Benke is just south of Sch nberg, Moravia. Bohemia and Moravia are the two provinces that comprise the fledgling Czech Republic. Sch nberg is about 20 miles south of the present day Polish province of Silesia. We had arrived in Sch nberg, now called Sumperk, the preceding evening and spent the night there at the (slightly less than) Grand Hotel. My father had once been a policeman in this city. In his day it was a place where German was the mother language of 95% of the citizenry, but now the city is 100% Czech. Except for the hotel clerk, we had found no people who could speak any German. Worse, even fewer people spoke English. I felt like a modern day Rip Van Winkle awakening after a fifty year sleep. Everywhere I had traveled in Europe, I had been able to get by in either English or German. Here, neither language worked and I felt uneasy about that. I didn't know what awaited me in Benke, which was now known as Benkov. The village had been my father's boyhood hometown.

If I found someone friendly there, how could we meaningfully communicate? I was anxious and nervous about that, as well. Yet, I was being drawn to Benke like a magnet. I drove on. Benke lies in a long, deep valley. As we approached, I could see the tops of buildings far down the incline of the road on which we were traveling. My father had often ruefully remembered the loooooonng uphill trek out of Benke. My heart raced in anticipation of the unknown.

Our branch of the K rners had lived in Benke for hundreds of years. The post World War II Czech government had deported most of the town's residents in a racially motivated expulsion of all persons with Germanic ethnicity. 3,500,000 Sudetens were expelled from the region in the single, largest mass deportation in recorded history. Yet, few people know about it. The expellees were not Germans. All those deported were legitimate, birthright Czech citizens. I do not have a German heritage. My heritage is Sudeten German and is rooted in Moravia. I personally can trace my line of K rners back to my great-great-great grandfather K rner, whose son Andreas was born in Benke in 1749. Benke had been behind the Iron Curtain and inaccessible to me for virtually my entire lifetime. I was here today seeking something, but to be honest, I really did not know precisely what.

As we slowly drove down the incline towards Benke, my mind also flashed back to a dimly lit "Mom and Pop" motel in Galion, Ohio. It was more years ago than I would care to admit. I was in this nondescript Midwest town for a job interview. I was trying to get to Europe in order to seek out my heritage. The local Galion telephone company had been seeking people to go to Stockholm for two years to learn all about a Swedish developed, computer controlled phone system. It looked like a superb way to explore Europe and facilitate my goal. Alas, the job search would prove to be unsuccessful. Equally unsuccessful would be the little game I always play when I'm on a trip anywhere. I pick up the local telephone book and thumb through it to see if there are any Koerners in the region. There were no job opportunities for me in Galion. There were no Koerners either.

Properly spelled, my last name is K rner. Since the symbol " " doesn't exist in English, neither does the phonetic sound that it represents. The correct sound can only be made by first sucking on a lemon to properly pucker your lips and then asking the person next to you to punch you in the stomach. This explains why there are no K rners in the good old U.S.A. How

many blows to the stomach would Americans take? Immigrant K rners solved the problem in many ways. Some dropped the umlaut. That changed their name to Korner, but led to a calculated mispronunciation of the name. Some changed it to Kerner, or Kurner. At least, those spellings approximated the proper pronunciation. The textbook way to solve the problem is the route my father chose; that is, to replace the " " with its "oe" English equivalent. The downside to this method is that the "oe" letter combination is not something with which an English speaker can easily cope. If it is pronounced properly, there is always that punch in the stomach with which to contend. There were also those who adopted this method and then tolerated Koerner's mispronunciation as Korner. That unfortunately leads to spellings like Corner. So I grew up with people misspelling and mispronouncing my last name, even after painstakingly spelling and properly pronouncing it for folks; e.g., "You can pick up your shirts on Tuesday, Mr. Cromer." Herbie Krynkewicz has an easier time. Trust me. In my little game, I seldom ever found a Koerner in the phone book. It was no big deal. It was just something I did on every trip.

Based on a Chamber of Commerce pamphlet placed in the motel room, I discovered Galion owed its existence to the fact that it was roughly equidistant from Cleveland, Toledo, and Columbus. Its location had made it a perfect water stop for trains going through Ohio in the steam railroad days. Needless to say, the town and railroad station looked a little rundown. Galion had long since passed its steam train heyday and urgently needed retraining for something else. A steam locomotive had not come through here for fifty years. Yet, my hometown is a railroad town in New Jersey named Waldwick. Based on that very tenuous connection, I related to Galion and its railroad history. Peculiarly, as we approached Benke, I reflected on my almost forgotten Galion trip. That was the only time I was ever in Galion, Ohio. Yet, I knew more about Galion than I did about Benke. At this point, I did not even know if my father's childhood home was still standing. Strange. This land is where my heritage lies, but because of the cruel deportation in 1946, I was a trespasser in my ancestral homeland. I had more of a legal and historical right to be in Galion, Ohio.

Now, as we stood by the town's sign, I shouted back at the disembodied echo that had greeted us and asked if we were from Benke, "Jawohl. Moment mal. Wir kommen gleich!" (Yes, just a minute, we'll be right there!). I was overjoyed at the prospect of being able to ask questions of someone in the village. The unlikely and improbable was apparently occurring. We discerned now that the man was standing by a fence some distance away. He stood there waving towards us and beckoning us to proceed towards him. His hand motions were inviting us to..."Come on. Come on." I glanced at Elke, gave her a "thumbs up" and uttered, "Bingo." We hopped back in our car and drove slowly towards the gesturing stranger. As I glided to a stop, he quite agilely descended an embankment next to the road. He appeared older than I and of larger build. He extended his open hand to shake my hand as I approached him. His large paw and a very firm grasp indicated he was a man used to physical labor. As we shook hands he said in flawless, unaccented German, "Willkommen in Benke. Ich heie K rner.....K rner, Otto. Seid Ihr deutsch?" (Welcome to Benke. My name is K rner.....Otto K rner. Are you Germans?).

My jaw literally dropped in astonishment. Here I was in Central Europe for the first time in my life. I could not speak a word of Czech. We were 600 hard driving miles from Munich, where we'd arrived in Europe. We were 11,000 literal miles from our San Diego, CA start point. I was a million figurative miles from Galion, Ohio. In a land enamored of consonant filled names, I was so distanced from the likelihood of finding a name with a double vowel in it that the odds of it happening were greater than winning two different lotteries ON THE SAME DAY. And that's exactly what had happened! The first person I meet in my father's hometown is a remaining Sudeten named K rner. And spelled with a " " yet. I couldn't believe it. What an incredible stroke of good fortune! My mind flooded with scores of questions for Herr K rner. Did he remember my father? Could he help me find my grandfather's house? Had he ever heard of me? Could we be related? I sensed this was going to be a most interesting day. And I hadn't even seen the local phone book!

EGER

C.A.Schimmer 1848

In the Northwest of Bohemia lies the Egerland, a wide fertile valley, with pretty villages nestled within it, encircled by a chain of wooded hills. A hardy, lively people call this their home, well-off, strong and industrious. In language and their way of life

the Egerlanders are related to the Franks. A characteristic feature of their land is its wealth in churches Chappels, Crosses, Marter posts; on every hill, gully and bush there is such a monument to the pious thought. The land forms a triangle, towards the southern edge lies Eger the main town.

The city has a circumference of about three-quarters of an hour. With its three suburbs it counts about 800 houses with 1000 inhabitants. The ground on which it stands is rocky and craggy, the cities southern part is much higher than its northern part.

On the north side flows the river Eger, which has its origins near Weißenstadt in Oberfranken. Magnificent is the city's Parish Church of St. Niklas; Both of its towers were burned by a lightning strike in 1742 and only one was rebuilt. We see a few towers of the old castle which still shows high walls on a freestanding crag facing the river Eger on the north west side of the city. The castle was the residence of the Burggrafen and often stood at the disposal of Kings and Emperors as an overnight stay during their travels, today it lies mostly in ruins but they still stand witness to their former magnificence.

The main sources of income of the Egerers are: Agriculture, cattle-breeding and manufacture, but most importantly the Breweries, leather, millinery and textiles industries, as their products find ready access to foreign markets. Well known for its quality was the Eger soap which is prepared by the ladies of Eger for their own use. From a commercial viewpoint Eger is well situated because of its proximity to the borders with Bohemia, Saxonia and Bavaria and it being at the hub of trade routes such as the Karlsbad, Pilsen, Leipzig and Regensburg highways, generating much activity in the in, out and transshipment of goods. Every year a large quantity of bohemian wheat is transshipped to Saxonian lands.

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

Duetsch-B hmische K che

A German-Bohemian Cookbook. Dozens of authentic German and German-Bohemian recipes.

Ring bound, soft cover, 88 pages of recipes. \$9.00

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

by LaVern J. Rippley. \$6.00

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

. \$5.00

Music

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

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

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

GBHS Officers and Board Members

1999 Officers

President

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

Vice President

Gerald Gulden

Treasurer

George Portner

Secretary

Charlotte Kastanek

GBHS Board of Directors

Board Member Emeritus

LaVern J. Rippley

Social Activities

Don Brand

Social Activities Chair, Budget Committee

Pat Kretsch

Newsletter Editor, Library Chair, Research, Membership

Louis Lindmeyer

Research Chair, Internet Chair, Program Chair, Education, Library

Robert Paulson

Sales Chair, Membership Chair, Treasurer Asst., Budget

Angeline Portner

Publicity Chair

Peggy Tauer

Hospitality Chair, Social Activities

Adeline Wilfahrt
Education Chair
Don Zwach
Budget Committee
Patrick Eckstein

Board Increases Dues For Foreign Members

The Board of Directors voted to increase membership dues for members living outside the continental U.S. to \$15 per year. The high cost of mailing the newsletter to these members accounted for the increase. The increase takes effect immediately for new members. Current members who have paid their dues for 1999 will not be affected until their dues are due for the year 2000.

German-Bohemian Heritage Society Board of Directors Meeting GBHS Research Center November 21, 1998

Meeting was called to order by President Paul Kretsch at 9:00 a.m.

Minutes of October 24, 1998 were read and accepted.

Treasurer Report was read and approved.

Vice-President Jerry Gulden called for committee reports. He is presently establishing a rap-sheet for budget and project management tracking, and forming committee job descriptions

Louis Lindmeyer reported on membership and the newsletter. The membership drive was tabled until the January Board Meeting. The newsletter is remaining at four issues per year.

Pat Kretsch reported on Social Activities. The Spring Dance is set for Sunday, April 18 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Entertainment will cost \$250.00. The Annual Picnic is set for August 14, 1999 at Herman Heights Park in shelter #2.

Bob Paulson reported on the Research Committee, Program Committee and the Folktales Project. Discussion followed regarding purchasing an ISBN for the Folktales Book and the cost of printing. The project will be on hold until after the Budget Committee has set the budget, and will be discussed at the January board meeting.

Bob Paulson has donated and loaned to the Research Center several items with the understanding that they are on loan as long as the Research Center is in existence. Should the Society disband, Bob will claim his items. If Bob should no longer be living at that time, all his loaned items are to be dispersed to Bob Paulson's heirs.

Discussion followed on staffing the office and Research Center, scheduling activities and the cataloging of books and research materials. Don Brand will be the Volunteer Coordinator. Shelley Gulden and Molly Schweinfurter will be contacted

and asked if they would be interested in cataloging the GBHS materials. The Board would like to have the office and Research Center open to the public in 1999.

Bob Paulson has another project underway which is to publish the musical score of "Die WaIdlermasse".

Scholarship Committee had no report.

Paul Kretsch brought up the idea of creating a GBHS logo. This item was tabled.

The GBHS Budget was discussed. Bob Paulson proposed setting up a budget committee with the purpose of establishing guidelines and budget needs of the Society.

Bob Paulson motioned that Pat Kretsch be Chairman of the Budget Committee with George Portner, Angie Portner, Paul Kretsch and Pat Eckstein as committee members. This committee is to submit a report to the board at the January meeting outlining a proposed budget. This motion was seconded by Don Brand. Motion passed.

Peggy Tauer volunteered to check into various grants that may be available to the GBHS. She will report her findings at the January 16th Board meeting.

Election of Officers followed. Pat Kretsch motioned that all current officers be accepted to their current position in Office. Bob Paulson seconded the motion with expression that the board pursue a constitutional amendment to establish term limits of officers. Motion passed. The 1999 GBHS Officers are President - Paul Kretsch, Vice President - Jerry Gulden, Treasurer - George Portner and Secretary - Charlotte Kastanek.

Pat Kretsch made a motion that the \$32.00 cost of the meals for GBHS member attendees at the Speilmanzug be paid for by the Society. Don Brand seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Paul Kretsch shared various correspondence with the Board, reported on the GBHS Christmas Tree at the Brown County Historical Society and shared various other updates.

The Calendar of Events for 1999 was set as follows:
January 16, 9 a.m., Board of Directors Meeting, GBHS R.S.
February 13, 9 a.m., General Meeting, N.U. Public Library
March 20, 9 a.m., Board of Directors Meeting, GBHS R.S.
April 18, 1 p.m., Spring Dance, Turner Hall, New Ulm
May 22, 9 a.m., General Meeting, N.U. Public Library
August 14, 11 a.m., Annual Picnic, Herman Heights Park

Jerry Gulden presented ideas for a survey of the membership. The purpose of this survey is to find out how to better serve our members. Suggestions for developing an evaluation form for members to fill out at General Meetings and special events will be used. After a response is reviewed, the Board will discuss the need for surveying the entire membership via the newsletter or special mailing.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

Charlotte Kastanek

Come And Dance

The annual GBHS Spring Dance will be held on Sunday April 18, 1999 from 1p.m. to 5p.m. at Turner Hall in New Ulm. Playing for your listening and dancing pleasure will be Dave and Sandy Suess and Johnny Helget. The German-Bohemian Heritage Singers and musicians will also perform for you during the afternoon event.

Come and enjoy your favorite old time music played by some of the best old time musicians on this planet and get a hand clapping, toe tapping performance by the GBHS Singers to boot. All for only \$5.00 admission charge. This event is open to the public so bring all your friends - and don't forget your dancing shoes!

The "H tscheischmied"

From Glaube und Heimat, Jahrgang 45 / Heft 8, August 1993. Based on original German text by Ignaz Pils, Teacher from Deutsch-Beneschau in the Bohemian forest.

The "Postlischmied" house (house of the smith named Postli) number 47 was in my neighborhood when I was a very young boy. Postli was a small, insignificant-looking man. He was of a lean and lanky build and had long loose eyeteeth in his otherwise almost toothless and constantly moving mouth. He could take hot iron in his blackened hands without injury and his face had many wrinkles that were always full of soot. He never took much trouble to clean it away completely, not even on festive holy days. . . Spiteful gossip maintained that he used only "H tschein" -- pine cones -- instead of charcoal to heat his forge and that was how he got the nickname "H tscheischmied."

Reading and writing were arts unknown to Postli and instead of a prayerbook he took a little book from his long ago schooldays to church. If a letter came from one of his adult daughters who was in household service in Vienna, he brought it to my mother who would read it for him. He listened attentively and concentrated on the way her lips formed every word. He was more than a little proud when one of the two daughters reported she was to be married and his wife quickly spread the happy news throughout the neighborhood. Every evening she would sit gossiping on the oven bench with a neighbor, old Mikloaschin. Nothing that happened in the neighborhood and nothing we said or did ever escaped their sharp eyes and ears.

Old Postli did not have a very good memory, in particular when it came to putting a name with a face. When he called any of the children to do an errand for him he always said, "Go, Kati, Marie, Nani, Resi, Rosi, go! Go get me a pack of tobacco at Tuschl's or Sixtein's!"

Postli specialized in making Widerhakeln -- iron chain links that could be inserted to repair a chain wherever it broke and that were always needed by farmers. He worked at the bellows with great enthusiasm and his hammer on the anvil sounded like wonderful music that rang over the roofs of our neighborhood. No wonder that we children would gather to watch eagerly as the sparks sprayed in all directions when he took an iron rod from the fire. And the wheezing and groaning of the big bellows in its dark corner was also most mysterious!

Every Saturday the bellows was quiet for on that day the little man took his potato basket full of Widerhakeln on his back and hiked to Kapliz to the cattle market where he had the best opportunity to sell his wares.

He did not like to stay at home. When he was alone with his wife the two of them were quite incompatible. However if one of the two daughters were home then the old man had a terrible time because mother and daughter would gang up on him. While he was gone they would plot against him and when he returned from Kaplitz they would always give him a very simple supper of Einbrennsuppe and potatoes.

One Saturday he had sold out of his Widerhakeln early and arrived home unexpectedly. His "seventh Sacrament" as he occasionally referred to his wife, had roasted a generous griddle full of Blutwurst for herself and her daughter and now the devil brought the old man back before they'd had time to enjoy their feast.

"Quick, Rosl, father is coming! Hide the wurst under the bed!" flustered the old woman when she heard the gate creak. They shamelessly served him soup and potatoes and then both women left the room saying they were not at all hungry. Old Postli thought their actions were suspicious and he also detected the aroma of the delicacy they had been roasting. Without making any noise he instinctively bent down towards the aroma, pulled the pan from under the bed and thoroughly enjoyed a rare and tasty meal. Then he pushed the empty pan back under the bed and set out down the path to the forest to collect a few "H tschein" for his forge, meeting a neighbor as he went out the gate. The two women who were pretending to be busy in the house entry heard him call out to the neighbor, "Today I had a really tasty meal!"

Mother and daughter went into the main room with mouths watering, pulled the griddle from its hiding place and immediately began calling the old man every irreverent name that men were ever called. His reception when he returned later that evening was quite cool but he took it in stride. Over the years he had developed a truly thick skin -- not just on his hands.

Society of German American Studies Twenty-Third Annual Symposium April 22-25, 1999 Holiday Inn, New Ulm, Minnesota

These times and events are tentative. Please contact New Ulm Chamber of Commerce for full details.

Tentative Program:

Thursday April 22: Registration 2-7 PM by **German-Bohemian Society** members in Tracht. Poolside 7-9 PM Gem tliches Beisamensein, free Faßbier & munchies, with strolling concertina players; sponsored by Schell Brewing Co., New Ulm

Friday April 23: Registration all day, scholarly papers; 6:30 Holiday Inn banquet @ \$12.00 followed by entertainment the **German-Bohemian Heritage Society Singers** sponsored by the New Ulm Visitors Bureau.

Saturday April 24: Registration 8-12:00, scholarly papers; Afternoon tours:

a) regional bus tour @ \$5.00;

b) museums and cemeteries @ \$5.00;

c) August Schell Brewery @ \$5.00 includes refreshments; combinations possible.

At 6:30 PM German buffet banquet at Turnverein Hall @ \$13.00 with entertainment following by the Concord Singers, sponsored by New Ulm Chamber of Commerce; Awards; thereafter, "old time" dancing to Stan Carda band in Turner Hall.

Sunday April 25: 9:00 AM Waldler Messe sung in German at New Ulm Cathedral, sponsored by the Cathedral, **Robert Paulson Choir**, and Martin Luther College musicians. Business meeting, papers.

Newsletter Deadline

The next issue of *The Heimatbrief* will be published in June. Deadline for submissions is April 30, 1999. Thank you.

Addresses

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

E-Mail

Society & Newsletter:

lal@mnict.net

Research Information:

rpaulgb@pioneerplanet.infi.net

GBHS Home Page On The World Wide Web:

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

German-Bohemian Heritage Society Non-Profit Org.

P.O. Box 822 U.S. Postage Paid

New Ulm, MN 56073-0822 Permit No. 54

New Ulm, MN

56073-0822

Join Us

**Membership Form For The German-Bohemian Heritage Society
Family Membership \$10.00 per Year in the U.S. or \$15.00 Foreign**

Name _____ **Phone #** _____

Address _____ **Email Address** _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

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

#