

 **German-Bohemian
Heritage Society
Newsletter**

**the
Heimatbrief** P.O. Box 822

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Vol X No. 3 September 1999 Louis Lindmeyer, Editor 

Coming Events

**September 11, 1999
Board of Directors Meeting
GBHS Research Center**

**October 23, 1999
GBHS General Meeting
New Ulm Public Library
New Ulm, MN**

Fall Meeting Set For October 23

The annual GBHS Fall Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 23, 1999 in the lower level of the New Ulm Public Library. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m.

On the business side of the meeting there will be an election of board of directors, and reports by the treasurer and secretary. Details of the guest speaker for the meeting had not been finalized when this issue of the 'Heimatbrief' went to press.

The Peasant Uprising in Bohemia in 1680

(Translated by Karen Hobbs from: Karl Stich, Ph.D., "Heimat in Böhmen; Semeschwitz -- Kreis Bischofteinitz," selbsverlag, Regensburg, 1988, Bauernaufstand in Böhmen, 1680.)

The causes for unrest among the peasants were deep-rooted. For more than two centuries after the Hussite Wars (1420-1436) the peasantry was no longer free, rather they sank into a situation akin to slavery.

In March, 1487, the Bohemian Landtag enacted the first laws restricting subjects' movement from their home fiefs and, according to Palacky, only a decade later in 1498 the estates (noble, ecclesiastic and urban authorities) showed little concern for the well being of the folk beneath them as demonstrated by the new regulations which intensified and tightened conditions for hereditary serfs.

Workers were forbidden to move out of the Herrschaft (fief or nobleman's dominion) where they lived and new prohibitions on the choice of a career and on marriage were added which served the same purpose of further binding serfs to the land. They also served to bind the descendents of farmers to the place where they were born and any proposed wedding in a city or in another Herrschaft depended on authorization of the landlord.

What the peasants found most oppressing was the compulsory hand labor and labor with draft animals they had to provide for the Herrschaft -- called Robot but often referred to as Scharwerk (make-work). There were two distinct types of compulsory labor or Robot; that which was measured and required for a certain number of weekdays and an unrestricted and uncounted number of hours deemed necessary for any specific project (i.e. construction of a new castle).

The members of a subject's family were also obligated to work as servants in a nobleman's manor house or Schloss for a number of years, earning the customary wages. Orphans also had this obligation.

The landlords had certain other entitlements in the form of produce and cash payments from their subjects and they held legal jurisdiction over their subjects as well as the right to inflict punishments. The nobility administered the land and they also administered justice. The peasants and Burgers had very limited possibilities under such a system.

The Landeshauptmann (the chief administrative official) of Moravia, Ctibor von Cimburg (d. 1494) advised his noble comrades that, "The peasants are obliged to provide services and also to make payments."

On another occasion he wrote: "These Robot workers, in regard to their wretchedness, would not be worth tolerating anywhere in the world if they were not able to work the ground as good as an ass. God bestowed upon the individual nobles (which he understood to include emperors, kings, princes, lords, knights and peers) the authority to govern the peasants according to his will and also to reprimand and punish them for their sins. (It is) for performance of such service that they have to pay rent and to make deliveries of produce." (There is a connotation here that these payments and deliveries are a kind of penance for sins against God's authorities.)

This was not merely the point of view of an outspoken individual. It came from one of the "noblest men" of the time.

The efforts of the high nobility did not end until they made sure that the state confirmed the legality of their position and their

rights. The subsequent increased abasement (subservience) and humiliation of the peasants led to a petition from the subjects of the Leitomischl Herrschaft in eastern Bohemia in which one of them asked for mitigation of a new burden of inherited obligations. The petition reads: "Coming to your most benevolent (merciful) highness as our merciful sovereign authority and on bended knee, as your own dutiful subjects, imploring your most benevolent highness to look upon us poor subjects with the eyes of compassion according to God's Will to consider the terrible poverty in which all subjects are mired that your noble favor (kindness, clemency) renders and proves your fatherly devotion, by which we would like all inherited taxes and other debts set aside so that we can better and more industriously perform robot as well as sustain ourselves."

The captain of a castle garrison dispatched to lead troops against local farmers made the following remarkable statement: "One must truly admit that when a Bohemian farmer endures all the labor that is imposed upon him by his landlord, all the other contributions (taxes) and extreme pressures (extortion) to which he must submit as well as all of the abuse brought upon him by soldiers he could very well be counted among the numbers of the Holy Martyrs."

Who could possibly be surprised when the thread of patience around the hopes and wishes of these same farmers finally broke?

In September, 1679, Emperor Leopold I along with his court fled the plague in Vienna and went to Prague. Once there he received news (in particular from the parts of Bohemia settled by Germans) in a series of petitions written to him personally that outlined the sad situation of the peasants.

In the middle of March, 1680, there were two meetings of various judges (Ortsvorstelter) in the Bischofteinitz Herrschaft who ultimately agreed to send a delegation to Prague. As soon as Count Adam Matthias von Trauttmansdorff learned of this on March 20 he had Captain Ladmann, his chief administrator, lock up all of the participating judges and had the delegation staying in Prague arrested. It appears that at least one of the envoys was successful in getting news of the events in Bischofteinitz to the emperor but his response was not as hoped. On April 1 a letter from the emperor to Trauttmansdorff requested that military forces be used against the rebellious subjects. In the meantime that had already happened.

On March 26, 1680, a Tuesday, the agitated and angry subjects of the Herrschaft gathered in a room between the city walls of Bischofteinitz and the Horschau Garden to emphasize their demands for granting decrease of compulsory labor and deliveries of produce.

General Christoph Wilhelm Harrant whose duty it was to suppress the peasant uprisings throughout the land, along with the highest officials of the district offices responsible for keeping peace and order made known an imperial decree dated March 22 that forbade complaining directly to the emperor and suspended all the pending privileges. In disbelief the people gathered there began to riot.

The General then ordered two Cuirass companies with standards unfurled and fixed bayonets to advance to the beat of drums to separate the judges and jury members from the rest of the crowd and to arrest them. After interrogating the prisoners all during the night it was determined that the judges of Hochsemlowitz, Messhals, Semeschit, Webrowa and Trohatin were the main leaders of the rioters. Altogether 24 people were jailed, 14 of them in Pilsen and 10 in Taus. The rest were released.

One person who was particularly obstinate during the interrogation was blindfolde



d and a Capuchin monk was brought in to hear his confession because he was to be executed on the spot. Such a threat might not only frighten the subjects of the Herrschaft out of resisting but also should have the same effect on the adjacent areas to which Bischofteinitz would dispatch scouts. Even those who stood apart during the unrest were chained and arrested by the soldiers and brought before General Harrant. After that drive ended in the early morning hours of March 27 the subjects scattered. The General took quarters in the Schloss along with his staff and he dispatched groups of soldiers to take up quarters in the surrounding villages.

The district officials belonged to the royal administrative offices of the district and were responsible for maintenance of peace and order, for the assessment and collection of taxes and for providing recruits for the army. The king selected those who served in these positions from the ranks of the noble landlords in each respective district and, of course, all of those who had

knightly or noble status were bound to him by oath. Nevertheless they represented their own class interests in the exercise of their offices and they were also paid with funds from the "St ndekasse." [State Treasury maintained by the nobility].

The riots in the Bischofteinitz Herrschaft (in which the part of the dominion belonging to Hostau was not involved) were quickly put down without bloodshed. When the delegation to Prague returned and gave their word to cooperate in restoring the peace Captain Ladmann personally released all but three of the local prisoners. On April 10 the military forces departed the Herrschaft and transferred to Pilsen.

Count Trauttmansdorff disapproved of his administrator's conduct because, in his opinion, releasing prisoners was the responsibility of the district officials. He issued an order to arrest the leaders of the riot again on April 20.

Ladmann arrested them on the pretext of settlement of military expenses and monthly payments that had to be discussed. The judge of Trohatin was the only one who resisted being taken to the prison in the Schloss. The names of those arrested included Gallus Schwenda from Messhals, Herr Gardiech from Hochsemowitz, Bartl Stempach from Webrowa, Peter Steinpach from Semeschitz, Wolf Stich from Maschowitz, Hans Steind rfer from Amplatz, Hans Sperrl from Sirb, Willewolt (Willibald) Pichl from Kotzoura, Pek (Steffan) Stiebinger from Trohatin and the Richter from Chrastowitz. In addition Martin Ihl from Webrow who had become violent against Nikl Stohl during the riot was arrested.

Only two days later some of them were again released on order of the district officials. Only the judges from Messhals, Hochsemowitz, Webrowa, Semeschitz and Trohatin remained in prison along with two farmers from Trohatin one of which was Hans Lantz who was the one to take the petition to Prague and present it to the emperor. During the following weeks the judges who had been released made a special effort on behalf of those who were still in prison. They collected money for them, they spoke to Ladmann in their favor and with his consent they also sent a written petition to the district officials but they were dissuaded from calling directly upon the count.

It seems that all during this period the emperor was evidently drafting an ordinance in Prague to work out the question of compulsory labor. In the Herrschaft things were quiet. Those subject to Robot and especially the judges (Richter) were ready to submit but the situation was not that simple.

On May 8 the Stallmeister named Hora announced to his lord that some of the people were very sullen and although some already understood their duty others did not want to do so.

By May 30, 1680, the count had already kept his subjects in prison for too long without further legal proceedings. He wrote two identical letters to General Harrant and Baron Hyzrl, both of whom were members of the Imperial Inquisition Commission. After some words of appreciation for their devotion to duty he advised them that the arrested subjects of his Herrschaft were still sitting in prison and that the associated expenses were piling up. He requested that the affair be brought to an end as quickly as possible.

Two more letters dated June 30 and July 2 still did not bring the Commissioners to Bischofteinitz. The result was that the emperor issued an ordinance on July 9 that discontinued the duties of the fact-finding commission effective immediately. Any subjects who had not yet been punished up to that point in time by decision of the commission were now given over to their own local authorities for punishment. It is somewhat remarkable that the prisoners in Bischofteinitz were released on August 14, 1680, most likely upon their individual promises of obedience.



The final item associated with the riot was a statement of expense that Captain Ladmann presented to the count on October 23, 1680. The total of expenses charged to the riot was 435 gulden, 7 kreuzer and 2 denare which was, of course, expense borne in full by the subjects.

It included such items (gathered by the tax clerk, Matthias Rudofsky) as 60 florins for military riders, 13 florins for two other messengers to Prague, 7 florins for a barrel (= 2,44 Hectoliter) of beer for the soldiers in Pollschitz and 118 florins, 11 kreuzer for food for the prisoners. The Schloss official, Daniel Dudecius calculated that the value of wine and beer for the soldiers

quartered at the Schloss at 122 florins 58 kreuzer 58 kronen 3 denar and the local clerk gave the cost of their food at 61 florins 17 kreuzer. Finally there was a bill from the Pfr denschreiber Friedrich Zedtlitz for grain that was dispensed to the military in the amount of 46 florins 5 denare.

The subjects of at least 30 other Herrschafts (ecclesiastical, secular and urban) in western Bohemia had risen up in 1



680 just like those of Bischofteinitz. They struggled for their "good old rights" against social corruption and the abuses of the landlords and state officials over which the emperor's oversight might be either good or bad.

They paid dearly for their disobedience with high fines and other punishments that included imprisonment in dungeons and even executions. They also suffered significant losses in two open battles with the military. On April 25, 1680, 54 farmers were killed and again as many were wounded, along with two soldiers, in a battle near Pladen (27 km south of Saaz). The second battle took place on the Schafberg near Weseritz (20 km east of Marienbad) on the evening of May 6, 1680, and during that confrontation 49 farmers were killed and 25 were wounded. One tenth of the 500 farmers who fought were killed to include Hans Muck from Hurz who was their leader.

Maria Franziska Countess von Haissenstein built a S hnapelle (chapel of atonement) in their memory on the Schafberg. Emperor Joseph II ordered it closed in 1787 and it fell into decay. In 1903 Karl Prince of Lowenstein (Haid) restored it. In 1936 the farmers of Weseritz County (Bezirke) erected a six-meter-high monument near the chapel which was designed by architect W. Giebisch of Bishofteinitz which still stands.

There is no German literature commemorating the peasant uprising and the property, blood and lives lost in the cause of the better future that resulted for succeeding generations. By contrast the Czech farmer Jan Sladky who was born in Taus and raised in Aujezd became a national hero because of his resistance against the German "tyrant" Wolf Maximilian von Lamingen on November 28, 1695, on the market plaza at Pilsen.

Rootsweb Email

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LOOSE ZIPS CAN SINK GENEALOGY SHIPS

by Brian Bonner Mavrogeorge
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Internet versions of the Social Security Death Master File (SSDMF) are very popular. Try this new site <<http://www.genealogy.com>>. One item included is the decedent's last residence.

The SSDMF identifies residence by ZIP code. These codes were implemented 1 July 1963. Internet indexes usually convert the ZIP into a locality name. (The U.S. Postal Service provides a file of current ZIP codes and the locations they cover.) This conversion helps illustrate a basic genealogy rule: "know the context in which the record was created."

What can be wrong with a ZIP code? (1) it may have been incorrectly recorded or invalid for the time of death -- there have been no Social Security Administration validation efforts; (2) it may have been abandoned and later used for a different location; (3) its zone boundary may have been realigned; (4) it may

encompass more than one town; (5) it may cross state boundaries (trivia -- which ones do?); and (6) it may be one of approximately 1.5% SSDMF ZIP codes that can't be converted because it isn't in the U.S. Postal Service ZIP file.

A residence name in a Social Security Death Index is a conversion, at the time the index was created, of the ZIP code to a place name. It may not be the actual place. Think of it as a pointer to where you may find the original death record.

Genealogical Resources

- Consumers Information Center: www.pueblo.gsa.gov
- Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet:

www.cyndislist.com

- National Archives and Records:

www.gov/genealogy/genindex.html

- National Genealogical Society:

www.ngsgenealogy.org

- Roots-L Home Page: www.rootsweb.com
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Family

History Center: **1-800-346-6044**

- Usgenweb Project: www.usgenweb.com

The Tale of the Prelate's Fountain

During the summer of 1618, a period of riot and disorder in Bohemia, the unbridled Protestant hordes led by Mansfeld surged into the parts of western Bohemia that had remained largely Catholic. Mansfeld's soldiers spread like wildfire over the countryside and wherever they went fear and anxiety followed. Whoever could do so fled to the security of the firm walls of the cities and castles. The nuns of Chotieschau fled to Pilsen where they owned a large and beautiful convent. They believed they would be safer there since Pilsen had remained loyal Catholic and faithful to the emperor.

During their flight to Pilsen the nuns came to the village called Asseraujezd and while they were there a young nun uncovered a spring of sweet fresh water while she was gathering wild flowers. Chotieschau and its environs did not have a good source of healthful water which was one of the reasons the sisters and their Prelate had been forced to flee. When they were able to return to their monastery the Prelate had a stone structure built over the spring which resembled a bishop's hat. After that the spring provided enough water for drinking and cooking at



the monastery every day.

The fountain with the dome of stone on the county highway Chotieschau-Dobraný is still there today and is known as the

Pralatenbrunnen -- the prelate's fountain.

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

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

One Hundred Tales from Sudetenland

Translated and Edited by Karen Hobbs

One hundred folk tales (fairly tales) translated from the original German text *Hundert Sagen aus den Sudetenl ndern* by Josef Rotter, 1952. A wonderful insight into the stories our ancestors told for generations. Ghosts, goblins, magic, witches, giants, dragons, and more. The only published collection of German-Bohemian folklore in English.

Soft cover, 197 pages \$14.00

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

Altar Ego

by *Frank Koerner*

I am a native of the province of Moravia in the fledgling Czech Republic. After a chronic illness of over 40 years, I'm recovering nicely.

The world events that have swirled around me during my life have necessitated a constantly altered and adaptive existence. I have lived under seven different governments with forms of monarchy, democracy, fascism, military administration, socialism, and communism. I have officially spoken two languages during those regimes.

I used to speak only German when folks came to visit me. My hometown was then called Ebersdorf. My several hundred neighbors consisted of a native folk called Sudetens, who ethnically were Germanic. Note that I did not explicitly say "Germans". Once, we were subjects of the Austrian Hapsburg monarchy. After the German/Austrian Alliance lost World War I, my land became a part of the First Czecho-Slovak Republic. Then it was taken over by Nazi Germany and became a part of the Third Reich.

In the aftermath of World War II, all my friends and neighbors were forcibly deported from Ebersdorf and its surrounding territory for hundreds of miles. 3,500,000 Sudetens were exiled in the largest mass deportation of a population in recorded history. The sole basis for deportation was ancestry, yet so few people are aware of the event. It was not only the Nazis who were racist in those days. On a single day, my town was forcibly evacuated and traditions that had lasted 1000 years were obliterated. Everyone was gone, except me.

Under government mandate, a whole new group of people moved in. My town was renamed Habartice. I then had to learn the Czech language of my new Slavic neighbors. My new friends had also been forcibly resettled. Although some of those new people stayed, many left. Some of them could not readily adapt. They felt quite uncomfortable and out of place in my world. Shortly thereafter, our government became Communist and my illness set in. As a result of that illness, I was unable to speak either Czech or German.

My unique nature set me apart from many of my close relatives of similar constitution. That fact alone saved me from destruction. Those of my family that exhibited obvious signs of wealth were forcibly removed. Some of my closest relations were eliminated by cruel and violent means. Although I possessed some wealth, it was an abstract wealth. My strength and power did not reside in my physical body, but in the intangible thoughts of my neighbors, whether Czech or Sudeten. They believed in me. In that manner, I was spared.

As a remaining, original inhabitant, nobody was allowed to visit me or to partake of my services. I was forced to serve in many roles for which I was not trained and to serve in many capacities that I did not enjoy. I was very lonely, but my faith sustained me. I knew normalcy would return someday. Many of my new Czech friends sympathized with my plight and hid

some of my possessions from the Communist authorities. Nevertheless, I became very depressed and run-down.

Preventative medicine was impossible under the Communist regime because money was scarce. I had no role, no function and, thus, no way to obtain money. Nevertheless, I hung on to existence.

Miraculously, in 1989 my illness lifted. I was again able to speak. The changes came slowly, but they came. Many of my former Sudeten neighbors remembered me. They came to visit me and were shocked by my physical appearance. All such returnees are forbidden to return permanently by the Benesch Decree that banned them. Nevertheless, they came to reminisce. They all recalled me when I was much younger and fit.

They donated monies to help to rehabilitate my deteriorated body. They did so out of the goodness of their hearts even though our relationship had been dormant for nearly half a century and we had not communicated in any physical way during all those years. Most were children when they were deported, but they remembered me fondly. I was surprised.

Their magnificent generosity has led to my remarkable physical recovery, further aided by the return of some of my long hidden belongings. My mental state is also much improved, since I am again allowed to commune. I speak Czech openly and joyfully entertain my friends on a once a month schedule.

Who am I? In the central European village formerly known as Ebersdorf .. I am the Roman Catholic church.

E-mail comments to the author at: ° Frank.O.Koerner@cpmx.saic.com

Memorials In Memory of

Francis Brandel

from Mariann Treml, Paul & Janice Kretsch,
Randy & Monica Wenninger, Frances Brandel

Oleta Tauer

from Randy & Monica Wenninger

Randy Kloeckl

from George & Angie Portner

Alyce Krzmarzick

from Eleanor Kretsch

Cathryn Kastanek

from Paul & Janice Kretsch, Benny Siefert,
George & Angie Portner, Robert Paulson,
Joleen Keckstein, Dorothy & Richard Holm,
Mariann Treml, Frances Brandel,
Jerry & Shirleen Gulden

Evelyn Sturm

from Eleanor Kretsch

Otto Janni

from Eleanor Kretsch

Robert Wiltscheck

from Mr. & Mrs. Wilbert Springer

Performance Dates German-Bohemian Heritage Singers

September 18, 1999

Rhein Fest
St. Paul, MN

September 24, 1999

Minnesota Business Educators
Holiday Inn, New Ulm, MN

October 2, 9

Oktoberfest
Holiday Inn, New Ulm, MN

October 3, 10

Oktoberfest
Turner Hall, New Ulm, MN

Queries

I am researching the family history of Leonard Bartl/Barthl from the village of Unterheutte. He was born in 1829 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 having died in Unterheutte.

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

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*Editors Note: You can find many village histories located on the GBHS website at www.rootsweb.com/~gbhs/
Click on Genealogical Resources , then click on Heimat Books .*

Long Time GBHS Member Cathryn (Gulden) Kastanek Passes Away

Cathryn M. Kastanek passed away May 30, 1999 at her home in rural Morrison County, Minnesota. Cathryn M. (Gulden) Kastanek was born on November 24, 1924 in rural Brown County, Minnesota to the late George & Eleanor (Dietz) Gulden. Cathryn married Jrwin Kastanek on July 2, 1951. Cathryn spent her life helping people as a Registered Nurse in Minnesota, Arizona, and New Mexico. She was an active member of the Minnesota Historical Society, Czechoslovakian & Minnesota Genealogical Societies and the German-Bohemian Heritage Society.

Cathryn is survived by her husband, Jrwin Kastanek of Hillman, MN; daughters, Colleen Kastanek, Charlotte Kastanek; son Allan Kastanek; four grandchildren, one great-grandson; sister Leora Wilkes and brother Leroy Gulden.

Cathryn M. Kastanek

Editors Note: Cathryn gave me this next article last winter to print in the Heimatbrief. I was saving it for the December issue, but because of her death I thought it was appropriate to run it in this issue. Reading this will give you an insight into Cathryn's past and why she was a valuable asset to this society. She will be sadly missed.

Looking Back

by Cathryn Gulden Kastanek

In our neighborhood, as probably on all German and German-Bohemian farms in Central Minnesota, December was a busy month. Not only were preparations underway for St. Nick's visit on the evening of December 5th and for the celebration of Christmas on the 25th, but it was butchering time.

Often, depending on the family, two or three men gathered at each others farm and performed the initial phases such as killing the animals, skinning the beef animal and scalding and scraping the pigs and then gutting them. Very little of the animal was wasted. Even some of the blood was saved. In our family it was used to make blood sausage, a delicacy our family enjoyed. Some of the intestines were saved to be used as casings for the various sausages. Mamma performed the unpleasant task of cleaning these. She washed them many, many times then used a large hairpin which she slid along the intestine after it had been turned inside out. They were washed through several rinses again. It was a very unpleasant task, especially in the days before water was piped into the house. We kids stayed away for fear we would be prevailed upon to help.

The meat that was used for the blood and liver sausage our family loved, was cooked, then mixed with the other ingredients. To my knowledge my parents had no written recipe. Mamma was the "mixer" with lots of unwelcome input from Daddy. They often disagreed on proportions of meat, pearl barley salt and whatever other ingredients were part of their "recipe". The amount of meat available for the project varied, depending on the size of the animals that had been butchered. Basically, the sausage was the same every year, yet there was always some variation.

Daddy reigned over the sausage stuffer, the small machine that pressed the mixture into the casings. First, there were several "taste tests". Then, we kids were allowed to turn the crank of the stuffer, with instructions from Daddy throughout the process. He held the casings and made sure they were filled just right--not too loose and not too tight. We were told that if we turned the crank haphazardly he couldn't do his part of the job.

Mamma and Daddy did have a written recipe for smoked country sausage but they didn't always adhere exactly to either ingredients or proportions. There too, the "taste test" was important. After the casings were filled Daddy did the smoking. Throughout the year he would salvage various suitable woods, and so depending on what wood was in plentiful supply for that year's smoking, it gave the sausage a unique taste. He liked to experiment with that aspect of sausage making.

A small building, designated as the "smokehouse" was part of every farmstead. It was usually located a short distance from the main buildings but still close enough so the nightly treks to check the fire during the smoking process weren't too uncomfortable. The smoking process always posed a threat of fire, the reason to isolate it from other buildings. Our smokehouse, I remember, was built of thick, upright tamarack slabs.

Our first breakfast of the finished product found Mamma and Daddy discussing it's merits and what might be done next year to obtain a better sausage. We kids thought it was great just as it was!

The final test came when visitors came during the Christmas Holidays or at evening card parties in each others homes. Homemade smoked sausage, homemade bread, dill pickles, cake and coffee were the lunch served before the guests left. I'm sure that each family discussed the sausage served, when they returned home. I know we did. I'm also sure that each family felt that "their sausage" was the best.

Now sausage can be purchased any time of the year. Modern meat markets cater to the tastes of sausage lovers. Those who raise their own beef and pork will have their butchering done by a professional butcher who will also make the sausages, if desired. The tools which were used to butcher, to grind meat to fill sausages, have become items for antique collectors. However, the ambiance and anticipation of sausage making as well as the camaraderie that prevailed when neighbors helped each other has been lost. It has been traded for convenience.

John Zwach

A Distinguished Legislator/Congressman

John Had 100% German-Bohemian Ancestry

He Was Recognized As A Strong Advocate For Rural America

**by Don Zwach, Nephew
zwachd@platec.net**

I feel that it can be argued that John M. Zwach is the most distinguished elected official with 100% German-Bohemian ancestry in Minnesota during the 20th Century. Allow me to proudly share with you the story and highlights of John's outstanding political career.

John represented Brown County and Redwood County in the Minnesota House of Representatives, Minnesota State Senate and the United States House of Representatives for 40 uninterrupted years from 1934 to 1974. He was a Minnesota State Representative six terms, a Minnesota State Senator five terms, and completed four terms as a Congressman in Washington DC from the Minnesota 6th District. John had a 40 year unbeaten political career. At the time of his retirement he had the longest unbroken record of service of any elected official in Minnesota.

His parents immigrated to America from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the New Ulm area. His father, Joseph, came to America in 1893 from Trohadin, House #24, and his mother, Barbara Hammerschmidt in 1891, from Schilligkau, House #10, both in county Bischofteinitz. They were born within 5 miles of each other with both attending St. Wenzel's Catholic church in Berg, but met for the first time in New Ulm, Minnesota. They married in 1901 and homesteaded in Gales Township, Redwood County. John was born February 7, 1907 (Dec. 1990) the 4th child of a farm family of 11 children.

The following excerpts on John Zwach's political career were taken from many newspaper articles found in the Redwood Gazette, Marshall Messenger, Minneapolis Tribune, St. Paul Pioneer Press, etc.

John's Early Years

Growing up near Milroy, Minnesota, John attended a country grade school, at first only speaking German, graduated from 8th grade, and was the only one of his class to go on to high school. Only one in ten 8th graders got to high school in the 1920's.

After a struggle because of tuition and transportation challenges, he was able to go to high school in Milroy. John stated, I had to walk 2 1/2 miles to the bus. When it rained, the road was mud. Often you didn't know if the bus was even coming. When it snowed it didn't. There were no snow plows back then. I vowed then that if I ever got an opportunity, I'd strike a blow for educational opportunity for countryside boys and girls. Later as a legislator the first bill he worked on was school bus transportation.

John went on to college at Mankato Normal College and received a degree in education. He later graduated from the University of Minnesota with distinction in political science, government and education. He taught in rural one-room schools, teacher/Principal at Lucan community school, Superintendent of Milroy schools and farmed.

Running for State Office

Back in the summer of 1934 . . . the at-large State Representative for Brown and Redwood counties, Albert Pfaender of New Ulm, had decided to run for governor (unsuccessfully), leaving his St. Paul job open. Filing for it were E.T. Ebbesen, the Mayor of Revere; E.C. Steinberg, Sanborn creamery operator; Emil Hage, a New Ulm man; and Zwach from Walnut Grove.

There wasn't much to campaigning in those days--no radio, no television, no campaign committees. Zwach bought himself a batch of campaign cards, some window signs, took out a few \$2 ads in The Redwood Gazette and New Ulm newspapers and went out to just meet the folks (His window signs said, in part: A Farmer Representing a Farm District . . . Able . . . Experienced . . . Fearless.). John recalled putting around the countryside in a Model A Ford in this huge district where he lived on the outer edge 55 miles from New Ulm. However, his Uncle and

John Zwach with President Richard Nixon at the White House in 1970

Aunt, Peter and Lena Zwach lived in New Ulm which gave him some name recognition. Peter had a welding shop in New Ulm. Lena eagerly went door to door in Goosetown urging people to vote for her nephew. His father, Joseph, accompanied John to Sleepy Eye and New Ulm speaking the Bomisch German-Bohemian dialect rallying support for his son. John stated, That first campaign cost me \$250 and, interestingly, nobody ever gave me a nickel in the 32 years I served in the Legislature. I never took a nickel from anybody for those campaigns.

The primary election was in June that year. FDR was in the middle of his first term, dust storms and depression were sweeping the land, federal lawmen were in Redwood Falls looking for Public Enemy John Dillinger, and Shirley Temple was playing in Little Miss Marker at the Redwood theater.

Zwach, described in the Redwood Falls Gazette as a political neophyte, was the primary winner by a substantial margin, 4529 votes to 3,033 for runner up Steinberg of Sanborn. In the general election, it was Zwach by about 3,500 votes over

Steinberg in the two counties of Brown and Redwood.

And thus began an incredible string of election victories. Seventeen in all. Fifteen generals and two primaries. And no defeats. In seven cases, the fearless, able and experienced farmer was reelected without opposition.

On to the State Senate

Zwach switched to the Minnesota State Senate in 1946, beating the incumbent Alex Seifert of New Ulm decisively 6,928 to 4,492 in the process. Scott Schoen, Editor of the Redwood Gazette stated, Zwach beat out on his first Senate try, a State Senator who was among the high and mighty in that body. By the mid 1960 s, he had become the most influential legislator in the upper house as majority leader from 1959 to 1966. He changed many Senate procedures including streamlining the legislative process, and enlarging the Rules Committee to ensure every committee Chair a voice in all areas of Senate procedure.

John was voted by his colleagues of both parties in 1959 as the man who made the most significant contribution to the 1959 session. He was also voted by his colleagues as the Most Respected Leader in the Senate.

During his years at the state level Zwach served on committees in agriculture, education, game and fish, highways, finance, and taxes. He headed an interim agricultural commission from 1955-57.

While serving in the Minnesota Senate from 1946-66 Zwach became chief author of the legislation that led to the formation of Southwest State University (SSU) in Marshall in 1963. When we created SSU, we created it as a liberal arts and technical school with the thought such a mix would be ideal, said Zwach. Zwach fought for ten years to get an institution into this area of the state as he always felt this area had been neglected in regard to higher education. Zwach held a firm belief in education. Of all the legislation Zwach worked on over the years, he was most proud of his service as chairman of an interim commission in 1956-57 which wrote the state school equalization aid law. That law gave every boy and girl in Minnesota State financial support for schooling. Today it is called foundation aid.

Running for Congress

But there were new horizons! Alex Olson appeared set for a long run in the U.S. Congress winning in 1962, but Republicans turned to Zwach, feeling he was about the only GOP vote-getter in the district capable of unseating the incumbent. Zwach hit the road, talked to anybody who would listen and probably shook more hands than any man in history in a demonstration of a campaigner in perpetual motion. And on election night 66, he was the winner by just over 4,000 votes. Two years later, he retained his congressional seat by 23,000 votes and subsequently was reelected two more times. In at least three of those four congressional elections, Twin Cities experts had predicted the defeat of the Gales township farmer who had never run second in his life.

Elected to the 90th Congress, Zwach served on Agriculture and District of Columbia Committees. In the area of agriculture, Zwach was a member of subcommittees on livestock, grains, dairy and poultry, domestic marketing and consumer relations. Zwach eagerly aired the concerns of the nation s rural population.

He encountered more lawyers than farmers on the House Agriculture Committee and was disappointed. But Zwach s perseverance and belief in a reasonable return for the farmer s labor made him a recognized spokesman. Supportive of parity for the farmer Zwach delighted in being called Mr. Parity.

Zwach, whose gravel-raspy-voice, plain-spoken manner and folksy campaigning made him something of a Minnesota political legend in his own time. His prairie populist philosophy made him a curiosity among the Capitol s sophisticated set, as he believed in the old-fashioned virtues. John credited his experiences as a teacher/principal at Lucan for getting him into the swift current.

But whatever, Zwach lacked in sophistication, he made up for in political instinct. His readiness to stray from party discipline to vote according to the sentiment of his independent-minded constituents is shown in the 65 per cent rating given him by the conservative Americans for Constitutional Action. Zwach was recognized by both Democrats and Republicans as one who votes and speaks along the lines of his constituency rather than always following party lines. He was dedicated to providing a better life for rural Americans, of which he was a prototype.

He viewed his principal accomplishments in Washington as his work on the target price concept enacted in the 1973 farm bill and his advocacy of rural development and congressional reform. A member of the Agriculture Committee, he was proud that he was able to insert a provision in the farm bill that would permit the construction of a \$50-million cooperative sugar-beet mill at Renville.

Having never lost an election in 40 years, John was asked what was his campaigning secrets? If there is a secret, it's total honesty, frankness and hard work . . . and liking people. Zwach commented. I always tried to merit reelection by doing a

good job as an incumbent. And I really like people: they're terrific. All of them are different, no two alike. And the vast majority of them are polite and gentlemanly.

It's the most enriching experience you can possibly have, Zwach said. I've known many high state officials for the last 40 years, and I've been privileged to meet world figures, like Konrad Adenauer of Germany, for instance. I've had an opportunity to serve and help people. I've spent two-thirds of my time trying to get people a fair deal from the bureaucracy which tends to become the master rather than the servant.

Retirement after 40 years

When John announced his retirement as of 1974, the Minneapolis Tribune Editorial stated: John Zwach, someone once said, was last in the alphabet, first at work. In his 32 years in the Minnesota Legislature and 8 in Congress, he has been a dedicated worker--too dedicated, perhaps, in the opinion of his doctor.

Although relatively inconspicuous in Congress--in sharp contrast to his front-and-center role as majority leader in the state Senate--Zwach has been an earnest, conscientious congressman, devoting himself to agriculture affairs with the evident approval of his 6th District constituents, who elected him four times.

In the Legislature he advanced to the powerful posts of chairman of the Rules Committee and Majority Leader. The familiar high pitched, raspy voice could be heard in virtually every debate on the floor as he wheedled and coaxed, rather than attempting to overpower, while pushing for Conservative legislation or opposing the DFL's.

Other Zwach retirement announcement reactions included:

The **New Ulm Journal** noted . . . Zwach has not short-changed his district . . . John worked so hard most of his life, he sometimes made us tired being around him. If the old Zwach zip has slowed down, then he deserves a rest and long retirement.

When he shook hands with his constituents there was a ring of sincerity about it, observed the **Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch**.

Our district will lose an awfully dedicated public servant . . . about as active a man as I have ever observed, said the **Hector Mirror**. A call or letter has always brought immediate response from the congressman with assurances that he was checking on the matter, and then a follow up.

The **Murray County Herald**, the Slayton paper acknowledged: Never in all these years of service has his name been remotely connected with scandal or unethical conduct. He retires with a record and a conscience as clean or cleaner than that of any man in the nation with that many years in public life.

The **Buffalo Lake News** set the tone for numerous other comments. John, it stated, has done an exceptional job representing the interests of the majority at all times. If you had been there yourself, you couldn't have done a better job.

John died at the age of 83 on November 11, 1990.

President George Bush called John in the hospital at Redwood Falls from the White House shortly before he died. John had a personal relationship with President Bush when they both served on the Agriculture Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The front page headline in the Minneapolis Star Tribune was: **Ex-Rep. John Zwach who looked out for rural Minnesota, dies at 83**. A few days later another headline in the upper right hand corner of the front page of Minneapolis Star Tribune was: **All knew John Zwach, but what they recall is his warm sincerity**.

Former Gov. Elmer L. Anderson, a contemporary of Zwach, characterized him as fair, kind and considerate, and a great credit to Minnesota. We were colleagues in the state Senate, and I just admired him for his integrity, he said. He took good care of his constituents, but he never took advantage of that trust. It's just a great loss when a person of such outstanding quality comes to the end of a career and end of a life.

He was a smart politician. He belonged to the Farm Bureau, the Farmers Union and the NFO, which takes some doing, said U.S. Rep. Vin Weber, R-Minn. I really think that John Zwach symbolized the politics of this part of the country better than anyone I know. He managed to find common threads and pull them together.

Today John s wife Agnes lives in Marshall. His children John and Dennis live in rural Walnut Grove, Barbara Sykora in Deephaven, Marie Iverson in Eagan and Anne Soupir in rural Milroy. Barbara Sykora has followed in her fathers footsteps in politics. She is a former Minnesota State Republican Chairwomen and since 1994 is a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives from District 43B, Excelsior.

I feel this German-Bohemian of immigrant parents, John Zwach, had a remarkable political career that truly made a difference serving the good people of Brown and Redwood Counties, the State of Minnesota and our country with distinction for 40 years in the 20th Century.

Queries

I am researching the **SCHRIMPF** family name. The family has been traced back to the village of Neumark, Kreis Taus, Bohemia.

Is Neumark still a city? Is there an address available to find further history of the area? Is anyone else out there researching the Schrimpf family name?

If you can help us in any way please contact us.

Sincerely,
Colleen & Orlie Schrimpf
P.O. Box 2235
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Newsletter Deadline

The next issue of the *Heimatbrief* will be published in December. Because of the Holidays the deadline for articles is October 15, 1999.

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