

German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter

The Heimatbrief

Vol XI No. 3 September 2000

Celebrating the GBHS' 15th Anniversary

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Coming Events

September 9, 2000
GBHS Board of Directors Meeting

October 21, 2000
GBHS Fall General Meeting
9 a.m. Lower Level of the
New Ulm Public Library

German-Bohemian Heritage Singers Schedule

September 10, 2000 1:00 p.m.
Herbstfest - St. Peter & Pauls Church
Mankato, MN

September 24, 2000
St. Marys Church Picnic, New Ulm

October 7 & 14, 2000
Oktoberfest, Holiday Inn, New Ulm
5:00 - 6:00 p.m. both Saturdays Poolside

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Front cover screened photo of the German-Bohemian Immigrant Monument located in German Park, New Ulm.

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GBHS Adopts New Logo

The GBHS board of directors recently voted to adopt a new society logo. The new logo was created by noted New Ulm artist Curt Schultz from several design ideas he submitted to the board of directors. Bits and pieces were taken from those designs and the logo above is the finished product.

The new logo will be used on stationary and correspondence as well as other print media. A sign was also made using the logo that now adorns the building where the GBHS Research Center is located.

Other ideas the board is working on are t-shirts, caps, sweatshirts, etc.

Language In Education

by Paul Fessler

Most believe that bilingual education is a radical new concept invented by Hispanics and other new immigrants who have refused to assimilate. Few realize that the first large scale bilingual school system in America began over 150 years ago. Or that it was the German language, not Spanish, that received such special treatment in America's public schools.

Today, we're going to look at one of these turn of the century bilingual programs in depth-that of New Ulm, Minnesota. You may be wondering, why choose New Ulm?!?! Why not cities like Cincinnati or Cleveland that also had bilingual programs in the public schools during

this time period? The simple answer is that those school systems' grade school records are no longer in existence-- and to actually examine the system, you need complete grade records of the students who were enrolled. Thanks to the Minnesota Historical Society, numerous grade school records from across the state were preserved and gathered under one roof. So, as for most historians, my study was driven by the sources.

As many of you know, New Ulm was founded as a Turner colony. The high visibility of the Turners in New Ulm led both contemporaries and historians to overlook the other groups of people who chose to settle in New Ulm. Thanks to the recent publication of Professor Rippley's and Robert Paulson's work on the German-Bohemians, we have a better grasp of the complex currents that lay beneath the stereotype of New Ulm as a Turner city.

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Turners. Though the German-Bohemian farmers prospered, their countrymen living in town were not so fortunate. At least through the turn of the century, they were among the poorest residents in the city of New Ulm.

Rippley contends that the German-Bohemians provided the manual labor to support the community. The Turners and others like them occupied the more prestigious professional occupations such as newspaper editors, doctors, and lawyers. This elitist mentality made it extremely difficult for those in the perceived lower status groups (like German-Bohemians) to participate fully in the community. The German-Bohemians, he argues, were far less educated than the Turners. The German-Bohemians, coming from a peasant mindset, neglected to learn English and to recognize that in America both the

English language and the educational opportunities it affords were pathways to greater financial success."

By contrast, the Turners who did better in school, did better economically within the community.

So, first, this paper will examine the New Ulm school system and how the various types of students that were enrolled performed academically and, later in their lives, economically. This exercise will bring into relief the potential differences between German-Bohemians and others in the system. Secondly, the paper will address the impact - if any- that the bilingual program had upon these. In other words, did bilingual education aid or detract from students' scholastic and occupational achievements?

First, we need to briefly examine the curriculum of the

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employment and textbook decisions. They are silent on the use of German and English in the classrooms. As in other ethnic enclaves where Germans were the dominant majority, the decision to teach German in the public schools was taken for granted. Until November 1872, the school board kept its minutes in German with an occasional translation of the minutes into English when the matters discussed were deemed important.

(Photo: St. Mary's parochial school, Sleepy Eye, Mn., about 1893)

Interest-ingly, the shift to Eng-lish in the school board minutes occurred at the same time the New Ulm public schools were certified by the state as an independent school district, and thus eligible to receive state funding. Using English in the school board minutes was apparently

deemed necessary to remain in compliance with state regulations. Still, the school board members themselves were far more comfortable speaking German instead of English. When important matters were discussed, motions were carried to conduct the debates in German.

The New Ulm public school sought to ensure that students gained complete mastery of the English language without losing their German language skills. As a German ethnic enclave, then, New Ulm and its public schools are notable not because they taught German but because they also placed a strong emphasis on English language training.

Through the first six grades, about one-third of the class day was devoted to German language instruction. Students took classes in German reading, grammar, and writing. By the sixth grade, however, German classes were phased out and seem to have been treated more as elective courses than as

informally required classes. By the seventh and eighth grades, only a few dedicated students interested in the classics of German literature continued taking German classes. In high school, there were no scheduled German classes except for the very few students who

requested them. At least one special German instructor was hired each year.

OK, in getting down to the nitty gritty of analyzing these students, you need to know a little bit about how I reached my conclusions. For the sake of time and sanity, I have decided to keep discussion of my quantitative analysis to a minimum and instead focus on the results.

First, I went to the records and selected all students enrolled in the first through fifth grades of New Ulm public schools in 1895 along with those entering the first grade in 1896 as my cohort. So, the grades for each of the 560 students in this cohort were entered into a data set. These students were then traced to the records of the

following school years--all the way up to when they would have graduated high school. These grades were entered into the data set as well. This tracing procedure captured the complete educational history of those students who remained in the New Ulm public schools. Thus, the analysis that follows is not based upon a sample of these school records, but upon the entire population of New Ulm students in the selected grades in 1895-1896.

These records included a wealth of information on the students' schooling beyond merely a student's grade point average. Students received a grade for each class subject, number of days present, number of days absent, department scores, math and science classes, English classes, and German classes --- each were entered into the data set.

The questions posed for this paper, however, cannot be

answered through school data alone. Were these students families' wealthy or poor? Were their parents born in America? This would have a potential impact on their schooling and social mobility. So, I traced these students to the 1895

Minnesota State census--finding about 80% of them and their families (a pretty good rate). All available information from the census for each member of his or her entire family was entered into the database and linked to that student.

One surprise was that considering their traditionally strong support for parochial schools, a surprisingly large number of German-Bohemians attended the public schools of New Ulm.

(Photo: Rural School Dist. #3 in Cotton-wood town-ship near New Ulm. Teacher Domeier is seen with his students.)

Twelve percent of the students traced to the 1895 census

had German-Bohemian fathers. The parents of these German-Bohemian children may have opted to send their children to public school rather than the parish school in order to save money. Perhaps these parents felt that the public school would offer a better education for their children. Either way, this was a fairly large percentage of German-Bohemians who were attending the public school.

In order to allow comparisons between the occupations of each household's head, an occupational coding system was required. This coding system is based upon the occupational classification column in the census manuscript. Rather than using a prestige index, I used an occupational income score developed by Matthew Sobek at the University of Minnesota that places occupational scores in dollar figures for turn of the century professions. While not perfect, this scoring system is the most accurate one available for turn of the century professions and allows for pretty fair comparisons over the time period considered.

I then used SPSS--a statistical software program-- and a method called Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) to determine differences and relative influences of each piece of data. This method expresses variance in terms of deviations from an overall mean or "grand mean". Using Table 2 as an example, the overall class average was 77.67 percent for New Ulm students for grades I through 8. Students whose family head (usually the father) was German-Bohemian averaged .02 points below the grand mean, while Germans averaged .10 points below the grand mean. The last column controls for the effects of other variables in this table. In other words, this column estimates difference in a student's overall class average if Germans and German-Bohemians had the same distribution in the number of children, the income score, and in proportion of students born abroad. Therefore, after controlling for the effects of the other variables, German-Bohemians are .01 points above the grand mean and Germans are .14 points above the grand mean. "Eta" and "Beta" are statistics that illustrate the relative influence of these variables on a scale from 0 to 1. This table presents its findings in terms that are intuitively meaningful to readers without a background in quantitative methods.

The majority of students had fathers who were German-Bohemian, German, or American born. The difference in the overall class averages separating these three categories is .11 points, which is not very wide variation. In other words, whether your father was born in Bohemia, some other Germanic state, or in the US seemed to have very little impact upon a student's academic performance.

Family income also played surprisingly insignificant role in affecting a student's overall academic average. In other words, students from poorer families did almost as well as

those from wealthier ones. To assure you, there was a wide range of occupations and income levels were present in this New Ulm population that we are looking at.

However, there were some more significant differences between the students in overall class averages. Not surprisingly, students who were themselves born in the United States performed slightly better than those who were born abroad. Native born children were more likely to possess better English language skills and a more established family environment than foreign born students. Likewise, those students from households with large numbers of siblings also performed slightly worse. Large families had fewer resources and less attention to devote to each child's academic career.

A student's overall grade score, however, can be deceiving in terms of judging his academic performance. Included in the overall score were grades covering physical education classes, music classes, singing classes and other non-academic activities. Also, because German language, literature and writing classes were also included in this overall score, many of the students from more recent immigrant families would perform better in these classes. Before making any further comparisons based on the ethnic differences in the total overall averages of the students, we can look at other more specific academic variables in order to highlight other differences.

A much wider range of ethnic differences can be seen in the German language class averages for this cohort. From what we have already mentioned, it is not surprising that German language classes are the one academic area in which the German-Bohemians outperformed all other students. German-Bohemians were more traditional and peasant oriented --- sticking closer to their European roots than their neighbors. This translated into better German scores. The children of native-born Americans, the majority of which are third generation Germans, performed the lowest of any group.

But did bilingual education slow this slide away from German language skills? After all, these losses occurred despite the best efforts of a German-English bilingual program designed to maintain skills in the German language. It depends upon one's perspective. Certainly, a public school curriculum taught entirely in German would improve the retention of German language skills among the students. However, bilingual students, not merely German language students with some skills in English, were the goal of the New Ulm system.

Lets turn to deportment. The assignment of deportment grades to each student provides a fascinating window into teachers' perceptions of the students and student groups. The German-Bohemians receive the lowest deportment scores among the groups listed. In all of the academic categories except the German courses, the German-

Bohemians consistently scored below the grand mean--they did slightly worse than everybody else --- but to a degree that it was statistically insignificant. The department scores, however, display a more pronounced, more statistically significant difference between the German-Bohemians and the other primary groups concerned.

These differences in department scores help reflect the social perceptions in New Ulm. The Turners and other German immigrants perceived the German-Bohemians as mere peasant stock--lower class. The fathers of the German-Bohemian children worked as low-wage day laborers at the bottom of the New Ulm economy. Teachers living and working in the city were likely influenced by these views even if they did not consciously subscribe to them. The lower economic status of the German-Bohemians also meant that their children probably were not as well dressed, well spoken, or well groomed as other students.

The most significant deviations among the different ethnic groups appear, however, when one examines the highest grade level attained by students. Although the German-Bohemians may have scored only slightly below other groups in the academic subject areas, this relative parity did not carry over to the length of time they spent in school. German-Bohemians stopped attending school more than a grade earlier than the children of other German born fathers and American born fathers.

What explains these ethnic differences? Economic status, family size, foreign birth, and academic achievement do not help explain the tendency for German-Bohemians to pull their children out of school earlier. In other words, the numbers don't help us here. Rather, these ethnic differences appear to stem from the German-Bohemians' cultural attitudes toward schooling and work. Their more "peasant" outlook on life placed little emphasis on schooling as a precondition for their life's work. Many of the German-Bohemian parents who had children in the New Ulm public schools hoped to earn enough money laboring in the Eagle Mill or the New Ulm Roller Mill to buy their own farms. Attending school beyond the stage of basic reading and writing would not help the family earn enough money to achieve their goal of farm ownership. So, what we have found is that German-Bohemians, though from the lower class, held up pretty well against the other Germans as far as academic performance is concerned. Where the difference occurred is in attitudes towards schooling and decisions to continue schooling into higher grades and into high school.

OK, now that we've looked at these students academic careers--- did academic achievement help once he entered the work force? Are these ethnic differences in the academic scores reflected in the income scores for these students when they became adults? To answer these

questions, I had to trace the New Ulm cohort forward in time to the 1920 United States census. By this time, these students had reached their late twenties to mid-thirties. As in nearly all other social mobility studies, those students traced to the 1920 census were limited to males. This limitation is due to the nature of the sources, an occupational income scale based on male incomes, and the difficulty of tracing married women who no longer used their maiden name. In addition, only those male students still living in Minnesota in 1920 were traced. The results of this search yielded a high linkage rate of 55.3 percent. Information on the male subjects and their families found in the censuses were input into the data set.

Each student's occupation in the 1920 census was then assigned an income using the occupational income score. Overall, these students earned less than their fathers had earned in 1895. The only students who broke this trend were the German-Bohemians. Their 22 percent increase in income represents a dramatic shift between the two generations.

Regardless of ethnicity, one might intuitively expect that those who received the best grades in school earned more money than other students as adults. One might also expect that those who performed poorly in school would earn relatively less money than those who excelled scholastically. Well, you may not want to use this study as a recruitment for scholastic achievement. As it turned out, the German-Bohemian students had higher incomes than all the other groups in 1920 despite having the worst academic record in the cohort. So while excellence in school (in terms of overall grade point average) was slightly related to higher income levels, this did not prevent the German-Bohemians from earning more money than all the other groups.

The best predictor of economic success later in life among the school variables was a mastery of the English language.

Those students who excelled in both English and German had incomes above the grand mean. Those who did poorly in English, did more poorly economically. Those who scored high in English and low in German classes, however, surpassed those who excelled in both languages. Thus, English, not German language performance, was the key.

The second greatest predictor of economic success from the students' academic records was grade-level attainment. Though grade performance may not have translated into high paying occupations, those few who made it to higher levels of schooling and, especially high school did earn more money than those who left school earlier.

To many Americans, though, the sign of prosperity was not necessarily good schooling or a prestigious job but home

ownership. Immigrants, in particular, tended to have higher home ownership rates than native born Americans. Some historians have argued that immigrants from a peasant background emphasized home ownership over extended schooling. If a son or daughter could start working as soon as possible then more money would be available to the family. This additional income would allow the family to buy their own house more quickly. In the New Ulm community, the German-Bohemians clearly held similar notions and values. However, would this mentality be reflected in the home ownership rates?

41% of all the former New Ulm students who were traced to the 1920 census owned a home by 1920. The German-Bohemians rate of home ownership is far higher than those from the other ethnic groups. Well over half the German-Bohemians owned their own homes, either mortgaged or free of debt. This pattern is further evident in a comparison of home ownership rates between foreign born students and native born students. While 64 percent of the foreign born owned their own homes, only 38 percent of the native born students were home owners.

Another consideration is whether students who remained in New Ulm as adults had higher rates of home ownership than those who decided to move elsewhere in Minnesota. Overall, 52 percent of the successfully traced New Ulm students opted to remain in New Ulm. Compared to the other ethnic groups, the German-Bohemians were much more likely to reside in New Ulm. 67 percent of the German-Bohemians chose to remain while approximately 50 percent of those who had German and American born fathers persisted in New Ulm. This confirms secondary sources noting that the other elements of New Ulm society were far more inclined to leave the city than the German-Bohemians.

OK, now we're at the conclusion-

First, how to summarize the comparison between German-Bohemians and others in the New Ulm public school system? Many German-Bohemians DID attend the city's Catholic school where the German language received more attention than English language instruction. BUT those German-Bohemians who attended the public schools likely benefited from receiving intensive English language instruction without sacrificing study of German. Although the German-Bohemians did not do as well as other groups in the school system, they held their own. Their tendency to leave school early and their decision not to attend high school differentiates German-Bohemians from the other students in the New Ulm public schools. Those German-Bohemians who attended the bilingual public school did better financially than conventional wisdom suggests. It is possible that the German Bohemian parents who sent their children to the public school were less traditional than those who sent their children to Catholic schools. However, the German-Bohemians in this cohort had fathers who were at the

bottom of the economic spectrum of New Ulm. They were not from any elite group of German-Bohemians. So, perhaps the reputation of German-Bohemians within New Ulm needs to be reconsidered. While they were not among the top elite, the significant numbers of German-Bohemians who did attend high school did amazingly well economically once they become adults--and most of them did this without leaving New Ulm for greener pastures.

Secondly, did bilingual education really hurt these students in the pocketbook when they became adults? Not really. A student who had mastered both languages in school suffered no appreciable economic disadvantages. So, bilingual skills did not seem to appreciably hurt them. Did it help--not necessarily--if you are talking about pocketbook issues. But it was not a hindrance to their success, either, to any great degree. Although not part of this paper, students from New Ulm compared very favorably to other German students within Minnesota who did NOT attend bilingual education classes. Maybe this isn't an earthshattering conclusion--but it is one in the middle ground that is missing from the debate about today's bilingual programs across the country.

Also, this paper highlights how quickly mother tongue language skills decline among succeeding generations in the United States--even with a bilingual program in place. Even in New Ulm, a German ethnic enclave with many recent German-speaking immigrants, found its own German residents losing their distinctive linguistic abilities by the third generation. And you must remember that this decline in German language skills proceeded at a rate much slower in rural cities like New Ulm compared to major metropolitan areas such as Minneapolis or Chicago. So, bilingual education did not seem to halt the linguistic assimilation of German-Americans into the US's English majority.

If student was not present in New Ulm city, then these students were not able to be found. No soundex system (a finding aid based on the phonetics of one's last name) similar to those for the federal manuscript censuses exists for the Minnesota state census. The Minnesota state census was chosen over the 1900 United States federal census in order to maximize the odds of successfully tracing students to the data.

The New Ulm Catholic school enrolled 230 pupils in 1892. As the largest Catholic group in New Ulm, German-Bohemians composed probably half of the students in the parochial school. German-Bohemians comprised approximately the same percentage of students in the partial grade records available for the school in the early twentieth century. This means that at least one-third of the German-Bohemian pupils in the city attended the public schools.

Credits: Johannes Enzlberger, Schermatismus der Catholischen Gestlichkeit Deutcher Zunge in den Vereinigten Staaten Amerikas (Milwaukee: Hoffmann Brothers Co., 1892), 284. Walter Kamphoefner, "German American Bilingualism: cui malo? Mother Tongue and Socioeconomic Status among the Second Generation in 1940," International Migration Review 28 (Winter 1994): 856. Perlmann, Ethnic Differences, 49. Rippley & Paulson, German-Bohemians, 120, 156-157. This approach expands its search further than other similar works that limit tracing efforts to those students still living in the same city. See Perlmann, Ethnic Differences. Oliver Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Rippley & Paulson, German-Bohemians, 155.

Schmolau

A Village History

Originally written by Franz Giptner and H. Herzog. Translated by Bob Liebl and Karen Hobbs

Schmolau lies in a lovely hollow between the 12th and 13th degree longitude more western and the 49th and 50th parallel degree north, 3 km west of Weißensulz and where the Baderbächlein splits in two, one the Hradschin and the other the Dorf.

Ernst Richter: Schmolau can be interpreted as the place in a narrow valley. The town name comes from the Czech Smolov. Smolov, from the Czech smula, smola, = Pitch, also Pitchtown. It could also be a derivation of a person's name, Smola. It's start was under the Counts Lamingern at the beginning of the 17th century and was probably first developed as a customs point.

Schmolau was first mentioned in 1678. It was part of the Herrschaft (domination) of Heiligenkreuz from the year 1789 to 1839. Today only a Meierhof (large farm) and a Teerschwellerei tar distiller stands there (hence Pitchtown).

According to statements of 1930, the community of Schmolau consisted of, the places Barentanz which had 2 houses, Neuhof with 16 houses, Karlbach with 11 houses, Rosendorf with 15 houses and Schmolau with 52 houses. Quite a few businesses, like the Erlbachsäge, a saws works with a Wagnerei (wagon maker), the Oberhammer with a Glasschleife (mirror factory) a Hegerhaus (clinic), the Schwarzweiler, belonged to Schmolau until World War I and a glass grinding business. There were two mills the Kunstmühle, and the Pallamühle along the Radbusa near a lock. The census of May 17, 1939 indicated that Schmolau had 192 houses with 650 inhabitants. The area amounted to 1491,20 ha (hectar - 1 hectare = 2.471 acres), of which 1063,88 ha was forests, 198,07 ha was fields, 155,41 ha was meadows, 37,73 ha pasture and 5,98

(Photo of Schmolau about 1940)

The origin of the town name, Schmolau, is defined by Dr.

ha Garden. The animals listed were:

Cattle altogether - 319 head
Cows - 161 head
Pigs - 180 head
Horses - 23 head
Goats - 17 head
Beekeepers - 52

Located in Schmolau-Oberhammer was the largest Wasserrad (waterwheel) in the county of Bischofteinitz. It was 7,50 m high and 2,20 m wide.

Schmolau belonged to Weißensulz parish, but after 1629 it belonged to the Pfarrei (Parish) of Heligenkreuz. Until the school district split up, Rosendorf, Karlbach, Neuhaus, Bärenanz, Hochwald and Annathal belonged to the political community of Pössigkau. It then became a substantially shorter to walk to school. There were many good teachers in Schmolau. Around 1914 Wenzel Guldan, Lehrer (teacher) Wokurka and Lehrer Giebisch, he brought the first Grammophon (Old time phonograph), with large sound funnel. Lehrerin Anna Wiesner, Lehrer Franz Käßmann, Lehrer Kraus, Lehrerin Anna Bergmann, Lehrer Rautschka, Lehrer Berger that the Schifahren introduced and Lehrer Rudl Sankowitsch. The school was dreiklassig (third level) and had 174 students in 1945. Previously to 1890, the school was in house no.17.

The voluntary fire department, was established in 1895, and had its Society gathering in the Gasthaus Hilpert. In 1930 the firehouse was built and the motor fire truck was purchased. There were 63 members, and the last Kommandant (Commander) was Josef Hilpert.

On the business way, there was 1 Schmied (blacksmith), 1 Schuhmacher (shoemaker), 3 Mühlen (millers), 1 Wagner (wagon maker), 3 Tischler (furniture maker), 1 Kaufladen (merchandise store), 1 Konsum (consumption) and 2 Gasthäuser (innkeepers).

After the World War I, the mayor was the proprietor, Michael Ortsvorsteherl. After him was Josef Schübert and as a last mayor in the old homeland was Josef Giptner. Who remained as the Ortsbetreuer (person keeping the history and the whereabouts of the towns folk) in Bavaria.

There was so much forest around Schmolau and so little arable land many cottager's farm fields turned out to be quite small. Haying in the little meadows didn't produce enough to last through the winter. For a small fee they received permission from the forest (administration) to "Schlochgroß" in clear cut forests which have been replanted, to cut grass. Grass that grew between the saplings had to be cut by hand with sickles to protect the plants.

Between haying and reaping (harvest) came the operation of Streuheigen (litter-haying) It was done in

the forest of the Heiligenkreuz Herrschaft. The straw served as bedding-straw (litter) for the cattle. Everyone in the village helped out on and had specific days to work. In the afternoon the housewives brought food, usually Dalken (Flat dumplings) and coffee. Thirst was quenched with spring water that the smaller children were sent to get in tankards. The haying lasted normally two days. Then the piles of hay were received and inspected by the ranger and the forester and were taken home on often difficult roads. Residents of Schmolau also found work and profit from a forest nursery.

Some noted personalities are also worth mentioning here. The Offizierstellvertreter Michael Haustein is said to have been a brave soldier of the 1st World War. Josef Grundler, Schmolau no. 41 came home from the war highly decorated.

Richard Guldan attended the modern high school in Budweis and studied construction engineering at the German Technical College in Prague. He became an assistant to professor Nowak and received his doctorate in 1931. In 1943 he was promoted to professor at the Technical College in Prague. Following the expulsion he was a professor in Hanover. He died in 1955 after a short severe illness.

In 1866, sergeant Georg Meyer of Schmolau was in the 35th Infantry Regiment took part in the bloody battles at Jitschin and Königgrätz.

Some historical events concerning Schmolau are still remembered. In 1781 a customs point was set up at Bärenanz. In 1820 it was transferred to Eisendorf. On August 17, 1876, four residences and barns at Schmolau burned down. In 1879, there was a tragic hunting accident in the vicinity of Bärntanz that cost the Treiber (Driver of the hunt) herr Lichner his life. In 1909 the group called German Bohemian Forest Bund was established. It had 93 members. In 1916 the main highway through Schmolau was rebuilt. That year is engraved on the bridge over the Erlbach. The local branch of the German Cultural Association was formed in 1920. The Entrepreneur, Wilhelm Dimpl, from Eisendorf got the concession for bus service between Eisendorf, Schmolau, Weissensulz, Waier and Ronsperg in 1929. Dictated by Franz Giptner and Herr Herzog.

Our Ancestors At War

(Submitted to Rootsweb Mailing List by Karen Hobbs)

For those whose ancestors served in World War I:
"The Austro-Hungarian Forces in the Field, October 1918."
by UK War Office.

The entire 225 pages of the book is an Order of Battle for the Austrian Army in 1918 -- tells what units made up various divisions and brigades (some independent brigades) of the army at that time. There is an index of regiments with their nationalities and Depot (HQ) cities given as well as a list of new regiments numbered 104 and above -- with some information on the older (lower numbers) regiments or recruiting districts from which their troops came (i.e. 133rd Infantry: IV old II/101= the fourth battalion of the 133rd was formerly the 2nd battalion of the 101st regiment). Schutzen, Honved (Hungarian), Landsturm, Feldjaeger, cavalry, artillery, dismounted cav, technical troops, etc. are all detailed as single troop units and as a part of a brigade or division.

Incidentally, IR 28, the Children of Prague, that deserted to the Russians is in the Index with Czech/Polish as its nationality and Innsbruck (Bruck.) listed as Depot for the I, II, and III Battalions. There is a footnote that says the regiment was struck off the rolls of the Army for mutiny on May 31, 1915, but has now been reformed (Oct. 1918?). The old Ist Battalion is now in the 94th--Reichenberg--regiment (may be the remnants of the old regiment that did not desert).

IR 36 (Brunn) that also deserted in great part to the Russians was disbanded on June 15, 1915 and was not yet reformed per October 1918. Thus if your ancestor was in IR

36 he either was in the Czech Legion that fought in Russia after May 15, 1915, or he was transferred to another Austrian regiment in June, 1915. The War Archive could probably tell you which units received soldiers from the old IR 35 in June, 1915.

The book also identifies a number of divisions and brigades, etc., that were disbanded prior to October 1918 with the date when that occurred.

The book is an excellent source for those who are searching for a unit that an ancestor was in during WW I. First of all it is in English!! Then, it would take some study (plan to spend an hour or two) but one could look for the name of the city that was known to be within an ancestral birth district among all of the "Depot" cities named and thus identify the best possibilities for units in which he may have served. Not an easy task but I have not yet found any alternative that would make it easier. There is no index of Depot towns in the book but there is an index of names of commanders for those who have family lore or documents that mention a commander's name.

The book will also give alternative possibilities with lists of battalions (from XXXX regiment) that made up mountain brigades or lists of newly formed regiments with the numbers of the old regiments from which they got a battalion or two.

Research on WWI soldiers is fairly difficult because Vienna does not have all of the usual information that is available for soldiers pre-1868. It is made doubly difficult because many men were recruited by a certain regiment but ended up in special units that did not serve with the regiment -- and whose records may not be with regimental records. There were also many changes caused by attrition during the war -- if a company was reduced so much that it was ineffective and reinforcements were not forthcoming its surviving soldiers might have ended up as reinforcements for another company from another regiment in the near vicinity. Thus a soldier did not always serve in the same unit for the duration of the war.

This book provides the individual researcher with information to include in a query to Vienna since it names the various troop units recruited in an ancestral district in 1918.

It may be available via interlibrary loan or it may also still be available for purchase direct from Battery Press (they are a mail order house), from internet book dealers or from your local bookstore on special order.

ISBN: UK: 1-870423-82-8

ISBN: USA 0-89839-209-8 Battery Press, Nashville, TN, 1994.

Sharing Our Trip to Furth August 1999

The latest copy of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter and the description of the planned trip for 2001 brought back wonderful memories of our trip to Furth im Wald in August, 1999.

We had just had a Fischer reunion (descendants of Wenzel and Franziska Rothmeier Fischer) in Wanda, MN. I am the daughter of Louise Fischer Schmitz and Wenzel and Franziska were her grandparents. All of the reminiscing at the reunion made me very curious. My grandfather, Frank Fischer, had always said he was from Trohatin.

Our son was being married in Poznan, Poland on August 14th. So we took advantage of our trip to Europe by going with friends, renting a car in Berlin, and after several days there, we drove to Furth im Wald. This was after much e-mailing back and forth with Don Zwach as to where to go, etc.

When we got to Furth, we found the town totally blocked off to through traffic. After making some inquiries, we found out that there was a festival and we could park our car and walk into town. This is one of those unexpected happenings when you are traveling which is what you remember and talk about the most when you return home.

What we came upon was the Drachenstich-Festspiele. The parade was in progress when we got there and it really was something magnificent to see. All of the participants were dressed in costumes representing various centuries beginning with 1086, the first historical record of the settlement of Furth, when the Counts of Bogen were granted the villages of Furth and Grabitz by the Emperor Heinrich IV. There were knights on horseback, peasants walking or riding in horse drawn carts; the pageantry reminded us of a medieval movie.

In the Fifteenth Century the Hussite Wars destroy the country. The Drachenstich Play refers to the year of 1431 when the imperial army was overcome by the Hussites at Taus and the slaying of the dragon by the Black Knight is based on traditional folklore. The original play was based on work by the Bavarian poet and narrator Josef Martin Bauer. The current dragon was presented in 1974 and is 18 meters long, 4 meters wide and 3.5 meters high. It made a very commanding impression in the parade!

We left our friends at a beer garden while Roger (my husband) and I went in search of the museum. We were able to find mapped layouts of the various villages with house numbers and lists of soldiers who had served, or

who were missing, etc. For instance, Georg Bruckbauer was listed as missing in Russland, 1919. Much of the information on the villages I already had from Don Zwach and Tom Fischer of Visalia, CA. When we climbed up the museum tower we saw a trunk with the name Anna Rothmeier on it. Were these familiar names relatives?

When we rejoined our friends in the beer garden, we found them in very animated conversation with several young men from the area who liked the idea that we were there searching for my "roots"! After enjoying conversation, "weisenbier" and singing the Bohmerwald lied, we decided to find the hotel where we would stay the night.

We went to an inn on the main street to inquire about rooms for the night and much to our surprise they were able to accommodate us.

Because of the festival, we were expecting, "sorry, no vacancy." When we started asking the owner about the best way to go into the Czech Republic and explained to him what we were trying to do, he was extremely helpful. He brought out a map for us and then he went to the back room and came out with a 50 Jahre Chronik Anlasslich Des 22. Bischofteinitzer Heimatkreistreffens vom 29. Mai bis 1. Juni 1997 in der Patenstadt Furth i. Wald which he gave to me. While paging through it, I saw pictures of the Deutsch-Bohmen-Vereins dated 1992 and 1993. There was also a picture of the German-Bohemian Monument. It was exciting to see these pictures in this booklet, especially recognizing Artie Dietz. His mother, Bertha Bruckbauer Dietz was my godmother.

Armed with the information the innkeeper gave us, we set off to drive through several of the villages on our way to Prague.

We got the key for the church in Berg from the man who lives in #3. According to the map, this house had belonged to Johann Rothmeier. This poor man must get a lot of visitors from the U.S. because he knew right away what we wanted and let us into the church and patiently waited for us as we looked around. We could see what the donations from GBHS had done in helping to preserve this lovely little church. We saw the tombstones of Josef and Anna Rothmeier of Natschetin. There was a tombstone for Barbara Helget. Georg Weisner was listed as having lived in #14 (the maternal grandmother of Andrew Bruckbauer was a Weisner).

We drove through Trohatin and saw the Zwach house. Barbara Bruckbauer is listed as having lived at #76. We also stopped to see the church in Muttersdorf. Obviously our time here was too short we were only passing through.

I was disappointed that we didn't find more information about the Fischers and Bruckbauers while we were there.

We know Grandpa Frank Fischer came over with his parents in 1901 on Frederick der Grosse from Bremen, Germany and gave Trohadin as the point of departure. However since our visit, we think we have found that Laurenz Fischer was a schafmeister in Wellowitz No. 1 (maybe he was my great-great grandfather) and so the search goes on. Brief though our visit was, I left with a better understanding of the people and the stories they told.

Meanwhile, it was on to Poland for more history in the making.

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GBHS Membership Dues to Increase

Beginning January 1, 2001 annual family dues for membership in the German-Bohemian Heritage Society will increase to \$15.00 per year.

Those members who pay their year 2001 dues before January 1, 2001 will receive a \$5.00 early payment discount having to pay only \$10.00 for their 2001 dues. Current and new members paying after January 1, 2001 membership will be \$15.00.

Memberships for outside of U.S. will remain at \$15.00.

Rootsweb ARCHIVE PUTS HUDDLED MASSES ON-LINE

Volunteers scanning Ellis Island Records.
(SF Examiner 2/2/99)

Climbing the family tree will take a lot less clawing as soon as a nonprofit foundation finishes a more than \$15 million project to post Ellis Island immigration records on the internet.

By helping people to access information instantly that previously was buried in a bureaucratic quagmire, the project will revolutionize genealogical research for many of the more than 113 million Americans who already

actively pursue their family histories.

Officials at the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation in NY, the same organization that gave Lady Liberty a face lift in 1986 without any public funding, estimate that more than 40% of Americans can trace their European ancestry back to Ellis Island.

"This is going to be a reference point", said Vern Deubler, Pres. of the Calif. Genealogical Society, which was based in San Francisco for a century before moving to Oakland this year. "It's going to provide people with very important leads".

By the end of next year (2000), the foundation hopes, people will be able to enter any information they know about a progenitor and the program will search more than 20 million records for a match. The software will even be able to tolerate misspellings.

If a match is found, the researcher can choose to print out a photo of the ship and a copy of the original manifesto that marked the immigrant's arrival.

At Fisherman's Wharf, Stephen Briganti, Chairman of the foundation, said the new database would especially help Bay Area researchers.

He said the Bay Area remains one of the major hubs for Ellis Island immigrants and their descendants. Tens of thousands of immigrants came here after arriving through the port, first to fuel the Industrial revolution and later to farm wine grapes. He said first generation travelers from the main Ellis Island years - 1892 to 1924 - still live in the area.

Briganti added that Californians' interest in Ellis Island immigration research, based on requests for the foundation's resources, is outstripped only by New Yorkers'.

The database - which organizers say could be ready by the end of 2000 - will catalog records of almost 20 million immigrants who flooded the tiny NY Harbor island. Until now, those documents have been stored at the National Archives and Immigration and Naturalization Service in the clunky microfilm format.

The first phase of the project was to collect and digitize records and install computers at the museum. Now, Briganti said, putting the information on the Internet has become a top goal as well.

"We're pretty confident this is going to work," Briganti said. "It's not perfect, but it's light years ahead of going to the Archives."

A demonstration of the system showed that a researcher

can enter information in any or all of 11 fields, which ask for personal information such as the subject's name and country of birth, and immigration, like the subject's port of entry.

Foundation spokeswoman Peg Zitko said the project got off the ground when a nationwide network of Mormon volunteers agreed to digitize the microfilm information for free. Thousands of volunteers have logged more than 2 million hours.

A spokesman for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City said the project was important to the church's mission. "We've always been involved in genealogy," said Dan Rascon, "because linking to our family helps us understand who we are and what we may become."

Information on the project may be found at www.ellisland.org on the internet.

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

Email: lal@mnnc.net

Our Readers Write

Landskron

I am looking for short (half-page) biographies of notable descendants of emigrants from the district of Landskron. Please send to Ed Langer, 11430 W. Woodside Drive, Hales Corners, WI 53130-1143.
email: edlanger@execpc.com

GBHS Fall Meeting October 21

The GBHS fall meeting will be held in the lower level of the New Ulm Public Library on October 21, 2000. The meeting will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m.

As is custom there will be reports from the secretary and treasurer. The guest speaker is not yet confirmed as this issue goes to press.

Newsletter Deadline

The next issue of the "Heimatbrief" will be mailed in December. Because of the holidays deadline for articles will be October 27, 2000. Please send us your free queries, letters, articles, favorite recipes, or your observations to:

More On the G-B Dialect

As you all probably know the ethnic Germans that inhabited the outer rim of Bohemia did not originate there. They migrated from various parts of what later became Germany starting as early as the 12th century, with the majority coming after the 30 Years War in the 17th century.

The German-Bohemians (G-Bs) that inhabited the "Bohmerwald" or southern and southwestern Bohemia mostly originated in Bavaria and spoke a dialect of old Bavarian called "Bayerish"

The G-Bs that inhabited western and northwestern Bohemia came across the border and spoke a Franconian dialect of old Bavarian that became known as "Böhmish". The G-Bs of northern Bohemia spoke a Saxonian dialect.

In fact there were as many variations in the vocabulary and sound of the dialect as there were villages in Bohemia. A G-B could tell from where people came from by the way they spoke the dialect.

When my mother went to Germany in 1980 she began to speak the dialect that she learned as a child from her grandmother to a native of the village from where her grandmother was born. This gentleman was immediately able to identify the dialect as coming from his village,

and this over 125 years after the emigration of the family from Bohemia.

<http://www.iarelated.com/czech/index.html>

Robert Paulson
GBHS Founder

Helpful Web Sites for Research

Czech Embassy: Official Site:
<http://www.czech.cz/washington/>
e-mail: washington@embassy.mzv.cz

Information on Genealogical Research in the Czech Republic:
<http://www.czech.cz/washington/cons/archive.htm>

Welcome To Czech Republic Genealogy!:
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~czewgw/>

Czech Info Center:
<http://www.muselik.com/czech/frame.html>

Czech Republic: Bohemia and Moravia Genealogical Research

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 (fairy tales) translated from the original German text *Hundert Sagen aus den Sudetenländern* 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-Böhmische Küche

A German-Bohemian Cookbook. Dozens of authentic

German and German-Bohemian recipes.
Ring bound, soft cover, 88 pages of recipes. \$9.00

**The Whoopee John Wilfahrt Dance Band, His
Bohemian-German Roots**
by LaVern J. Rippley. \$6.00

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

Music

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

**“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

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56073-0822

Join Us

Membership Form For The German-Bohemian Heritage Society
Family Membership \$10.00 per Year in the U.S. (\$15.00 beginning Jan. 1, 2001) or \$15.00 Foreign
(Family membership includes those living in the same household)

Name _____ **Phone#** _____

Address _____ **Email Address** _____

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

Please list surnames you are researching including geographical locations and/or villages. (Optional)

