

# the Heimatbrie

A Newsletter Magazine of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society

Celebrating the GBHS' 16th Year

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Vol XII No. 2    September 2001

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## Coming Events

**October 13, 2001**

**GBHS Fall Meeting  
Evening Meeting at Turner Hall,  
New Ulm. Time to be Announced.  
Please Mark Your Calendars**

**September 15, 2001**

**Board of Directors Meeting  
GBHS Research Center**

# GBHS Officers and Board Members

## 2001 Officers

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## German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter

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The GBHS "Heimatbrief" newsletter is published four times per year in March, June, September, December. Deadlines for articles are posted in each newsletter. Membership dues are \$15.00 per year for a family membership in the continental U.S., \$15.00 outside the U.S. Family membership includes those living in the same household. GBHS financial statements are available to members upon request.

Articles contained in this newsletter may not be copied, published, or distributed for commercial purposes without the written consent of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society.

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

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# GBHS Fall Meeting Set

## Don Heinrich Tolzmann to Speak at Evening Meeting

GBHS founder Robert Paulson has retained Don Heinrich Tolzmann as guest speaker for the GBHS fall meeting to be held on Saturday, October 13, 2001. This year's meeting will have a change in time and venue with the meeting being held in the evening and the venue being changed to Turner Hall in New Ulm.

The evening meeting will include a social hour, a dinner, a short business meeting with reports from officers and an election of board of directors, and conclude with our guest speaker. Mr. Tolzmann's topic will be "Exploring the New Ulm German-American Experience".

Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Curator of the German-American Collection and Director of the German-American Studies Program at the University of Cincinnati, serves as president of the Society for German-American Studies, which held its annual meeting in New Ulm, and will again meet there in 2004. Has edited two books on New Ulm: Jacob Nix's [The Sioux Uprising in Minnesota](#) and J.H. Strasser's [New Ulm in Word and Picture](#), and has edited and just published three books:

- L.A. Fritsche's [Brown County \(New Ulm\), Minnesota Pioneers and Their Families](#)
- [Memories of the Battle of New Ulm: Personal Accounts of the Sioux Uprising: L.A. Fritsche's History](#)
- [Outbreak and Massacre by the Dakota Indians in Minnesota in 1862: Marion P. Satterlee's Minute Account](#).

Members living within a 150 mile radius will receive a mailer in the near future detailing the event including cost and content of the meal, how to make reservations, and specific times. Those living outside this area may make reservations by calling Paul Kretsch at 507-354-2763.

Please mark your calendars now for this wonderful event. You won't want to miss it!

## "Bohemian King" Kurt Eisen Passes On

Kurt Eisen, the German-Bohemian Heritage Societies Bohemian King, passed away on Saturday, August 18, 2001. Ironically Kurt passed away about the same time that a silent prayer was being said for him at the GBHS picnic in New Ulm that same afternoon.

Kurt was born on August 27, 1921, in Marienbad, Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia). He married Ella Arbes on December 17, 1946, in Wertingen, Bavaria, Germany. In April 1955 they immigrated to the United States first living in Wladorf, MN., then in August 1955 they moved to New Ulm, MN.

Kurt was a early member of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society serving as a board of director from 1990 - 1993. Kurt was also a charter member of the German-Bohemian Heritage Singers where he was instrumental in helping develop new song material. Kurt and his wife Ella also served as the GBHS' honorary "Bohemian King and Queen".

Kurt is survived by his wife Ella, daughter Heidi Glover and husband James, and son Horst and his wife Cindy, three grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter.

Kurt was a friend of many of us in the German-Bohemian Heritage Society and will be sadly missed. Many times Kurt would tell us stories of the homeland and the expulsion which he experienced first hand. The German-Bohemian dialect was his first language and loved to speak it with those who were able to converse it.

In the September 1992 issue of the "Heimatbrief" appeared an article written by Kurt. Below is a reprint of that article. Perhaps after reading this article you will have a better understanding of why we will miss him so much. *Ed.*

## A GUEST ARTICLE

by Kurt Eisen

(Editors note: This article was written by Kurt Eisen of New Ulm as part of the Monument Book project. We wish to share his article with you because we think it is very informative, touching, and real. It also provides us with a first-hand look at the expulsion from the homeland and immigration to America.)

The German-Bohemian Monument in New Ulm may have

been the dream of one man but it has become a reality for all of us. It was not an easy task to accomplish. With teamwork for planning, organizing, fund raising, etc., the project was completed. What would it cost, how would it be paid for, where would it be located, were all issues that had to be dealt with. I helped with this undertaking as a member of the Board of Directors. Since the monument's completion, I realize that not only did I help to build a lasting memorial to honor the German-Bohemian settlers in this area but that I am one of those settlers this monument represents. My wife and I are the last surviving immigrants from Bohemia living in New Ulm.

My wife, Eleonore Arbes, and I were born and raised in Bohemia (now Czechoslovakia) in 1921 and lived there until being evacuated from our homeland in 1946. Three and one-half million German-speaking people were forced to leave their homes with a mere 70 kilograms of belongings. We were loaded into box cars on trains, 40 persons to a car, and shipped like animals to Germany, leaving behind all our property, homes, farms, livestock, etc. Germany had been defeated in the war. They were hurting with lack of food, no jobs and inadequate housing. We were strangers to the German people but were forced into their available living quarters. We were not welcomed with open arms. The various German dialects caused a barrier between the people which took months to overcome.

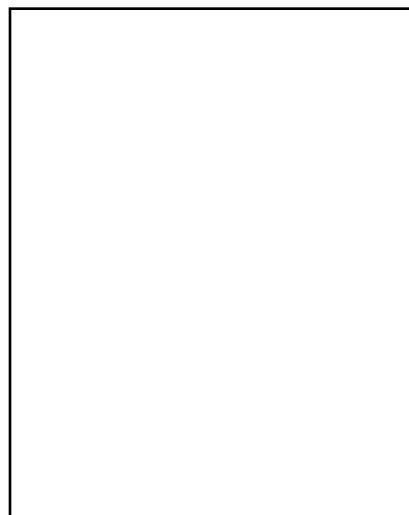
During this economically and politically unstable time, I made the decision, as soon as possible, to emigrate to the United States. In the meantime, I had a wife and two children aged 5 and 7, to support. An American sponsor and a job had to be found before we could immigrate. After 2 1/2 years of waiting, we finally received our visas for America in the spring of 1955. Unlike my ancestors in the late 1800's, we came to America by airplane, not ship. It's ironic that we settled in New Ulm, Minnesota (a city we had never heard of) because we had lived within 50 miles of Ulm, Germany from 1946-1955. The Lord certainly directed us, for we settled in New Ulm in the midst of this German-Bohemian area. This has been the right place for us; we feel at home here in New Ulm.

With the founding of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society, I have become an active member, serving my second term on the Board of Directors. Through my knowledge of the Bohemian dialect and my homeland of Bohemia, there has been ample work to keep me busy. I am proud to speak the Bohemian dialect and still do today with my family. The Heritage Society gives me the opportunity to teach this dialect to those members who cannot speak it or to refresh those who can, to better understand the dialect which our ancestors spoke.

At one of our annual society picnics, the Kretsch brothers

sang a few songs in the Bohemian dialect. For me, this was like being back in Bohemia. After this, we formed a singing group for anyone willing to sing folk songs from the Bohmerwald homeland. We started out with five or six older people who remembered many of these songs and enjoyed singing them once again. At present, our singing group totals 17 members of all ages. It is fun for us to speak and sing in the Bohemian dialect and by doing this, we keep our heritage alive. Our group performs several times throughout the year at dances, nursing homes, picnics, etc.

The mission of our German-Bohemian Heritage Society did not end with the completion of the Immigrant Monument; the heritage will be kept alive for years to come. Hopefully, I will continue to be a vital and productive member of this society for many more years since I am the last of the German-Bohemian immigrants in New Ulm.



**Kurt Eisen**  
August 27, 1921 - August 18, 2001

***Rest in Peace***

# 2001 Heritage Tour A Huge Success

*by Robert Paulson*

The 2001 German-Bohemian Heritage Society Tour was a huge success no matter how you measure it. The flight, the tours, the food and hotels, the guide and driver, all could not have been better. The tour went off without a hitch. The only thing that could have been improved was the weather. It rained for the first few days, but this did not seem to dampen the spirits of the tour group.

were so anxious to return the seat of government back to this impressive city. It was, and soon will be again, one of the most impressive cities in Europe.

Our visit to our homeland in western Bohemia and, the Treffen des Heimatkreis des Bischofteinitz, the reunion of the homeland county of Bischofteinitz, were filled with many memorable events. We were able to visit the homes, churches and cemeteries in the villages in which our ancestors once lived and from which they emigrated over 100 years ago. This an an experience that is very hard to describe.....We were also able to visit with many of the former residents of these villages in the evening at the homeland reunion held in Furth im Wald. In some cases these village residents even accompanied us on our village tours. It was disheartening to see, however, that the villages for the most part continue to deteriorate.



*John Gag (center left with concertina) playing with Czech band Chodovanka*

Passau was beautiful, even if the Danube River was flooding. We had a very pleasant visit with Leopold Hafner and his family. Leopold is the sculptor of the German-Bohemian Immigrant Monument in New Ulm and is the resident sculptor for the dioceses of Passau. He showed us many of his beautiful works in the cathedral. Krummau and Prague were very picturesque as expected, beautifully restored to there original grandeur and, surprisingly, not crowded. Dresden, once the most beautiful Baroque city in Europe, is slowly being returned to its former grandeur after the horrible fire-bombing late in WWII. And Berlin, one can see why the Germans

The highlights of the tour for me were many. I was particularly glad to be able to bring my daughter, Donna, to visit the site of the village of Neubäu where her great-great grandfather was born and to the memorial of the Church of St. George which he helped to finance. I was also very moved by the extraordinary welcome that we received as we entered the Festhalle on the opening evening of the Heimattreffen. The "Americans" were paraded into the hall led by the local brass band to the applause and cheers of the nearly 1000 German guests. Herr Joseph Mauerer, the president of the Heimatkreis Bischofteinitz made us feel very welcome and very

special indeed.

The other highlights are associated with music. My friend Don Hofmeister and I each bought a Flügelhorn ( a member of the cornet and trumpet family of musical instruments) at a music store in Krummau (they were much less expensive than in the U.S.) Don's grandfather was Capt. Joseph Hofmeister, an immigrant from the village of Neuhausl, Bohemia and one of the best musicians in New Ulm. He was the founder and conductor of the very famous 2nd Regiment Band. Don and I had the opportunity to sit in and play our instruments with the Egerländer Musikanten the brass band playing at the Heimat treffen. If this was not thrill enough, we brought our Flügel along on the village tours and when we visited Neuhausl, Don's ancestral home, we played together the German hymn, "Grosser Gott", while standing within the ruins of the church. The emotions of the moment were almost overpowering!

And finally, to top things off with another musical moment; with the tour was Johnny Gag, one of the very best concertina players. John had played with many of the "big name" polka bands from New Ulm. I had persuaded John to bring his concertina along on the tour with him. I had hired the very fine Czech musical folk group, Chodovanka, to come to our hotel for an evening entertainment. It was a real "musical moment" when Johnny Gag joined together with the members of the Chodovanka to play the famous polka "Rosamunda" or "Roll Out The Barrel". Experiencing Johnny and Tomala, the leader of Chodovanka, work or should I say "play" together was the real highlight of the trip for me; a German-Bohemian and a Czech-Bohemian, making music together. Music is truly a "universal language"!

## New Email Address

Please make note of the new email address for correspondence with the newsletter editor and to submit articles, queries, or notices. The new email address is: [lal@newulmtel.net](mailto:lal@newulmtel.net)

**1938: Sudeten welcome for German soldiers in Czech border town. By permission - French National Archives**

# PRELUDE TO EXILE

by Don Koestler

There have been many stories in the Heimatbrief dealing with the nostalgia of life in the Homeland, and the horrors of deportation. It is as if the tragedy of expulsion descended like a plague in 1945. Actually, the exile of over 3,000,000 Sudeten Germans between 1945 and 1946 had its roots in the fall of 1938. It could not have been predicted then-, it is not much acknowledged now. The events of the fall of 1938 have become a part of the silent years which started with the high hopes of "liberation from ethnic tyranny, and ended in sheer despair.

My Grand Uncle, Johann Köstler, a Sudeten German who

lived in Mies County, Egerland left a diary which covers the period. Just before and after Hitler took over Sudetenland as a protectorate of Germany. Johann, in his 70's, was retired and lived on a farm in the small village of Nedraschitz, Czechoslovakia with his son Georg and family. He was the family historian and a known leader in his community. It was his nature to record the events in his life. His diary gives a dramatic account of the period from September of 1938 to the time when he died in April of 1939.

**Sept 28.** In the observations that follow come from a translation of the diary by his Granddaughter, Margaret McCowan. The comments for a given day are Johann's entries. Parenthetical remarks have been added to give further explanation. Comments covering more than one day are summaries by the author.

Background to events: Czech resentment toward the German citizens of the country had reached its peak and atrocities were occurring regularly. The Sudetens (often armed) demonstrated against the provocation. Meanwhile the leaders of Europe were being persuaded to give Hitler the Sudeten German part of Czechoslovakia (areas where the German population was over 50%). The Czech government was moving troops and equipment in order to defend its borders. Hitler got his way without a shot being fired; October 1 was the date agreed to for occupation by Germany.

**Sept 12 1938.** Today there are rumors that we are standing on the eve of war. All Party members (Social Democrats) had to go to Kostelzen (a neighboring village and the Parish Center) last night.

A (Czech) tank with anti-aircraft guns and two big army trucks used for setting up iron bar anti-tank barriers called, "Spanish Riders," drove through our village.

The S.D.P. (Social Democratic Party) had to discontinue their meetings because the State Police beat up some of their members. Now things are getting critical. Sunday in Kapsch (nearby village) the talk was that on Tuesday the 13th there is to be a decision - war or no war. I am wondering what all this is about.

**Sept 14.** Yesterday Hitler spoke in Nürnberg, he had harsh words for Czechoslovakia. In the night the (Czech) military went through our village with battle equipment for the villages of Kapsch and Weshorsch. Now the rumor is going around that there is marshal law in the town of Mies (the county seat), and that Weshorsch has to be evacuated in one hour. Everybody is upset. Equipment is still being transported to Kapsch and Weshorsch. There is supposed to be a decision today if there is going to be war with Germany or not. By the behavior of the Czechs, war seems unavoidable. They have drafted men up to 43 years old.

**Sept 24-25.** Mobilization. There was a mobilization of all men up to the age of 40. In Johann's village 25 men and 4 horses were drafted. The village was allowed to keep 3 horses. All other horses and wagons were sent to Blattnitz. Radios were confiscated. Guns had already been collected on the 18th. In Kapsch and Weshorsch people were forbidden to go into the fields, but the order was rescinded on the same day. 25 workers were picked up in Nedraschitz (by the government).

Kapsch, Czech and Bolshevik soldiers broke into the church mansion. They forced open all the doors and cupboards. They stole everything. The church custodian, Mr. Greif, was able to save the Monstrance and Goblet by taking them to his home.

Under orders from the officers, the soldiers then nailed all the doors shut. Women soldiers slept in the beds from the mansion.

Today is the 3rd holy day without a Holy Mass. The priest is gone, but the people are holding prayer meetings. What will the next hours bring? Now the rumor is that there will be a decision about the war before Oct. 1st. Everybody is upset and wondering.

**Sept 29.** Today 10 workers had to be given up to the Czechs. My son Georg and Mr. Huwatch also had to go. (Probably taken to a government work camp.)

**Sept 30 - Oct 3.** The workers start to get paid. All kinds of rumors are going around. The word is that all is well. New rules on voting rights were announced. Counties that have at least a 75% German population will be allowed to vote. Under 75% German can not. Mies county is not allowed to vote. Johann exclaims, "Now we are at the mercy of the Czechs; God help us!"

The tower was taken down in Kapsch and all transport was stopped. The soldiers and barbed wire are gone. In the town of Sieben Bergen there are refugees (at this time these must have been Czechs fleeing the Nazis) and they have guns and ammunition.

**Oct 4.** Our son Hans came back today. Hitler is in Eger (the town of Eger is the gateway to Czechoslovakia from Germany) and Franzensbad. There are still some Czech soldiers in Kapsch. Here in our village, in front of our house, there is a military kitchen. It cooks for 300-350 men. The village has to supply 2 horses morning and night. We saw our first refugees back on Oct. 1st.

**Oct 6.** There are still soldiers in Kapsch, Kostelzen and our village. The Red Cross is located in Koetelzen, and we still have the kitchen. In Kapsch teacher Wenig was beaten.

**Oct 7.** Today the Czech soldiers removed the ventilators

from their bunkers (preparing to leave). In our village everything is ready to greet the German soldiers. Greens for wreaths and garlands have been collected. (Granddaughter Margaret and her sister Anna were seen by Czech soldiers while they were collecting greens to welcome the German soldiers. They were frightened, dropped what they had collected, and ran.) German flags are being purchased. On Oct. 5th we had the first case of Hoof & Mouth disease in the village. This was at house #52.

**Oct 9.** Heil Hitler! Today around 4PM the first German patrols arrived here. The village was all decked out with flags and greens. All the people lined the street and the troops were greeted with music. (Margaret, who was eight years old and had the classic German features of blonde hair and blue eyes, was picked to recite a little verse of welcome. She got scared and started to cry.) Teacher Lewis quickly spoke a greeting. A sergeant gave the reply. The musicians played the German Anthem, "Deutschland Über Alles." In the evening the rest of the troops, 380 men, arrived. In our house was the signing book.

**Oct 10.** A long line of German soldiers, artillery and riders went through our village today. It was headed toward the village of Honositz: and lasted for 2 hours.

**Oct 11.** This evening we had a concert in the village. Whoever asked for horses got some from the German military to help with the work. We got two. There are two men quartered at our house. One is the colonel's chauffeur. The other is an office worker from the Staab Chancellery.

**Oct 15.** The last 8 days we have had Hoof and Mouth disease in our barn.

**Oct 17.** The bunkers were blown up today and the barbed wire removed.

**Oct 18.** Today we got new village and road signs in German. In my 72 years of age, it is the 3rd time.

**Oct 26.** My son, Johann Köstler, Jr. was made trust manager. (This probably was a reference to the store which belonged to the Jewish, Popper family. Other accounts had the Poppers fleeing prior to Hitler's take-over of the country. Johann, Jr. had been renting a house from the Poppers and was chosen to dispose of their furniture and belongings. In the next entry we find that a member of the Popper family was still in the village on this day and probably asked Johann, Jr. to take an inventory.)

Alfred Popper and Priest Kopetzki were picked up by the police. Pflug Wenzel and Johann Schluck were thrown out of the village council. These two Social

Democrats had already become communists.

**Oct 30.** The Czech 100 Kroner bills are no longer legal tender. The bank books have to be adjusted now. In Kostelzen we got a new church administration. Priest Kopetzki won't be around anymore. Now I can go to church in Kostelzen again.

**Oct 31.** We had a Thanksgiving mass in Kostelzen, The Fire Department and Youth Organization marched with music to the war memorial where they played the song, "Der Gut Kameraden." In the church we sang, "Hier Liegt vor delner Majestftt," and " Großer Gott wir loben dich."

**Nov 6.** Priest Kopetzki and his housekeeper were transported by truck to the Czech border. The same day an inventory was taken in Popper's store.

**Nov 15-29.** Johann got very sick and received the Last Rites five times in that month. He survives and comments on the difficulties of changing from Czech to German money -especially changing all of the prices. As of December 1st only Reichs Marks are to be used. He sees 1938 as having been a good year both economically and politically. He reflects on the political changes as having been made without bloodshed -- something, "which in the history of the world has not been done." Then he proudly proclaims: "Now we are really Germans, 'till now we were German Bohemians."

**Apr 10, 1939.** Today was "Easter Riding". The Resurrection Celebration was very festive; there were about 30 riders. The Fire department, the Hitler Youth, and women in the old traditional costumes took part. Many soldiers were home on furlough in their German uniforms. All this came about with the annexation into Germany and our having a new Priest. The old Priest (Kopetski) would never have let that happen.

(This was the last diary entry. Johann died on April 24, 1939. Years later Johann, Jr. commented that he was glad that his father had not lived to see the deportation.)

Hitler did not stop with Sudetenland and later went on to the seat of government in Prague. Edward Benes, the president of Czechoslovakia, fled the country and set up an exile government in England. He did not preside over the final days of the collapse of his country. During his exile in London he is said to have planned the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.

At the end of the war in 1945, turmoil and lawlessness took over Czechoslovakia. The Czech people retaliated against the Sudetens for Nazi atrocities: they killed and drove many of them from the country. These expulsions were called the "Wild transfers." They had the appearance of spontaneity by the people, with the

markings of government staging; the terrorist groups known as "Red Guards," worked in conjunction with the Czech National Committees. The violence was further fueled by the presence of Soviet troops pursuing German soldiers still in retreat. There was also a communist presence in action.

Unlike the "wild transfers," the deportation of the Sudetens by the Czech government in 1946 had no pretense of spontaneity. In exile Benes, angered by what had happened in 1938, had worked to promote his plan for a complete removal of Germans from Czechoslovakia. By 1946 he had the agreement of the Allies in Potsdam to openly implement his "transfers". Like the Czechs in the streets, he was motivated by a need for vengeance, but his arguments to them had been of a practical nature:

1. Following the defeat of the Germans, the boundaries of his country would have to be reestablished. When Hitler had taken the Sudeten border areas in 1938, he took all of the perimeter fortifications. The country was left defenseless.

2. That these border lands would again be filled with a people with closer ties to Germany than to him was intolerable. The Sudetens would have to go! The idea of a "transfer" out of Czechoslovakia was born. (There was always this talk of "transfer." It wasn't until after 1997 that any Czech leader would actually use the word expulsion.)

The Germans, who had been "fellow citizens" for three to four hundred years did not have any say in the matter and were treated horribly. Now, over fifty some years later, there has been a "Declaration of Reconciliation" between the Czech Republic and Germany. In terms of compensation to individuals, it does nothing for the damages to either side.

The situation today is much like it was in the 13th century, when Otakar II invited German craftsmen to live in Bohemia. The Czech Republic has decided that it needs good ties to Germany for economic reasons. This time the need is for capital investments and industrial partnerships. It is also facing West rather than East. It has become a member of NATO and looks with interest on the European Union.

As for Johann, he would be pleased with the successful lives that his descendants have made for themselves in Germany and the United States.

Donald Koestler, 10525 Fernridge Ln., El Paso, TX  
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## Cookbook Review

*The following is a review of the GBHS 2nd edition cookbook sent to us by John-Leonard Berg, University of Wisconsin-Platteville*

**Deutsch- Bohmische Kuche (2nd Edition)**  
**German -Bohemian Heritage Society of New Ulm, MN**  
**Published 2000**  
**\$12.00**  
**222 pages**

This ethnic cookbook is a cultural encyclopedia of the German-Bohemian people. Many of the immigrants coming from Europe in the late 18th and early 19th Century called themselves Bohemians and shared a unique history, faith and cuisine. Deutsch-Bohmische Kuche is respectful of this tradition and faithfully presents key historical events and culinary delights remembered by loyal descendants living in or somehow associated with New Ulm, MN. The lengthy historical section recapitulates a typical farmyard butchering scene, discusses the value of the shared family meal and reminisces about farm life back in the old country. The captivating "Heritage" section considers soapmaking, techniques, recipes for elderberry jam and dandelion wine and how to prepare pickled tongue and sultz. Complete menus are given for authentic German-Bohemian meals including holiday meals of Thanksgiving and Christmas. The rest of the cookbook is fairly typical with recipes for soups, salads, meats, and desserts. Blank pages are bound into the book for the convenience of adding, your own favorite recipes or personal notes. Illustrations, maps, a glossary and an index complete this phenomenal text.

Recommended for ethnic collections and public libraries serving the descendants of German ancestors.

John-Leonard Berg, University of Wisconsin-Platteville

## Research Center Hours

The GBHS Research Center, located at 1200 So. Broadway, New Ulm, MN., is open the first Saturday of each month from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and the second Tuesday of each month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

The Research Center may not be open holiday weekends so please call in advance. Other hours also possible by appointment. For further information call Don Brand at 507-354-5688.

## We Toured Grandma's

# **We Toured Grandma's House in the Czech Republic**

*By Don Brand  
GBHS tour member*

One of the real pluses of the GBHS group tour to Old Bohemia in June was an opportunity to tour the inside of my grandmother's house. It's the house she left at age 18 in 1868 to immigrate to the New Ulm area.

On the GBHS tour in 1995, cousins from Germany took me to Neumark and pointed out the house where Barbara Haas lived. This time, I remembered the location across the street from the old school, but it had a different look. It had been repainted since our last visit.

I saw the Czech owner working outside the house and approached him: "Sprechen sie Deutsch?" He said he spoke a little German, so we conversed for a time. I told him my grandmother lived in that house before moving to America.

After a bit more conversation, he invited me inside to see the renovation work he had been doing the past three years since he bought the house. It was a typical old German-style house with stucco exterior and clay tile roof. The house is over 200 years old.

The Heimattreffen in Furth-im-Wald was an opportunity to visit with people at the Muttersdorf table. A number of Schnobrich families immigrated to New Ulm from that village in Bohemia. Later, we had an opportunity to get a personal tour of the Muttersdorf church from the pastor. Renovation has begun, but much work remains.

The pastor noted that many churches were closed under Communism from 1946 to 1990. Church buildings were used for military storage and suffered much from neglect. Now, few Czechs go to church because for many years they did not have that opportunity. Funds for rebuilding the churches must come from former Sudetenland residents and from American ancestors. Our GBHS society has given \$500 in the past for church roof repair. On the tour, members took up a collection to go toward further renovation.

# **Memorials In Memory of . . . .**

*recorded by Angie Portner*

**Myrtle Benson**

from Matthew & Coletta Gulden

**Clarence Groehler**

from Don & Myrtle Brand

**Wally Fesenmaier**

from Don & Myrtle Brand

**Veronica Portner**

from Paul & Janice Kretsch,  
Randy & Monica Wenninger

**Jack Foster**

from Jerry & Shirleen Gulden,  
George & Angie Portner

**Leo Dittrich**

from LaVerne & LaDonna Schugel

**"Marni" Geraldine Olson**

from Don & Myrtle Brand

**Wally Tolzman**

John W. Freisike

**Dorothy Holm**

from Mariann Treml, Willard & Alice Manderfeld,  
Paul & Janice Kretsch, George & Angie Portner,  
Willard & Alice Wilfahrt

# Research Center Helps Researcher

The German Bohemian Heritage Society Library in New Ulm helped me trace my Grandfather's arrival date in America, his ship's name and a photo of the ship!

Genealogy research is fascinating . . . little bits of discovery will often take you in an exciting direction. In a matter of 2 months I located my Grandfather, Joseph Zwach on the passenger list of the ship Stuttgart that arrived in Baltimore in 1894 and shortly thereafter obtained a photo of his ship! Joseph left Trohatin, Bohemia alone to come to America at the young age of 16 to join his older brother Peter Zwach in New Ulm. How daring to leave home at such a young age for a new country on a small ship! Another piece of my family history puzzle was now filled in. I am sure other Minnesota German-Bohemians in the New Ulm area came over on the Stuttgart or similar ships in the 1890's.

Volume IX (we also have volume 1-8) of the Czech Immigration Passenger Lists arriving in Baltimore researched by Leo Baca who lives in Texas. As Leo researched Czech immigrants, some Germans by mistake were included in his research because they lived in Czech villages. I had eagerly read his previous 8 books of passenger lists thinking my Grandfather or Grandmother might be listed . . . no luck. Then the 9th book arrived and BINGO! That's my Grandpa!! On page 204 it stated the following: ZWACH, Josef 16, Trohatin, Bohemia: Stuttgart, 9 May, 1894; New Ulm, Minnesota. The data for each passenger listed contained the above information: the name of the person, age, the name of the country from which the immigrant came, the name of the ship (underlined), the date of arrival, and the destination (if given).

Leo's book listed six basic sources of ship pictures in the USA. I had to try and find a photo of Grandpa Joseph's ship. On the Internet I struck gold with the first listing: Steamship Historical Society of America, Inc. at the University of Baltimore Library, in Maryland. They listed the Stuttgart in their collection and for \$24 I could get a photo of it. Three weeks later it arrived!

## *The Ship Stuttgart*

How did I find this information? In March of 2001, I attended a GBHS Board meeting at our Societies Research Center at 1200 So. Broadway, in New Ulm, Minnesota. The Research Center has many books, pamphlets, and research materials on our German Bohemian history. Our Society had just received

The Library included the following information about the Ship my grandfather sailed on in 1894:

Stuttgart (1889) North German Lloyd.

Built by Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co., Glasgow, Scotland. Tonnage: 5,048. Dimensions: 415 feet by 48 feet. Single-screw, 13 knots. Triple expansion engines. Two masts and one funnel. Steel hull. Made her final voyage to New York in 1909. Scrapped in 1909. Sister ships: Darmstadt, Gera, Karlsruhe, Oldenburg and Weimar.

Leo Baca in his research on Czech arrivals (which included some Germans) in Baltimore between 1880 and 1899 identified of 30,126 Czech arrivals. In his 9 volumes of research, there is a cumulative identification of nearly 205,000 Czech names from 1820 to 1899. In 1880 3 ships had the largest number of arrivals on a given ship in all of his research.. There 516 Czechs on the Berlin, 486 Czechs on the Braunschweig and 475 Czechs on the Hermann. 1880 must of have been a difficult year in the homeland, or the American Railroads had promoted some good deals that enticed people to immigrate and settle in America.

Don Zwach  
Waseca, MN  
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507-835-1768

## The Nightwatchmen of Reichenberg

Interpretation of an article by Viktor Lug in Jeschken-Iser Jahrbüch, 1990 by Karen Hobbs

The night watchmen of the Reichenberg community are documented from earliest times. The city books themselves contain many notations about selecting and equipping the men of the "nightwatch." For example, on the feast of St. Thomas in 1575 the local furrier was paid 15 Groschen for reshaping (taking up, fitting) and mending, in 1577 the same furrier received 3 Shock and 45 Groschen for fitting a new fur for a nightwatch man. In 1620 the city paid 19 Groschen for two "Nachthörner" (signal horns) for the nightwatch and during the same year another 4 Schock paid for a "Wachtpelz" (fur garment) for a watchman.

From time to time the total number of watchmen was increased -- especially during wartime unrest or dangerous plagues. The additional watchmen were always recruited from among the local citizens. One such case occurred after the riots throughout Bohemia at the beginning of the Thirty Years War. At that time local

the Battle of White Mountain the organization of guards became permanent and the city set aside funds to support them. The expenditures noted at the time by Bürgermeister Elias Ulrich include: "On November 21 (1620) the first nightwatch took place and each soldier received 2 Schock from me."

The names of the 15 guards who received that payment for one-half month indicate that they were sons of the citizens of Reichenberg. They were: Melchior Horn, Matz Leffler, Hanns Eckert, Elias Flicke, Hnas Scholze, Geörge Flicke, Hans Hässler, Hanns Galle, Christoph Schiedel, Hanns Schmiedt, David Herfahrt, Geörge Posselt, Matthes Bergmann, Matz Buchelt und Geörge König. Their commander was a captain from Friedland and the supplies issued included 12 pounds of lead costing 6 Gröschel each, one Schock of powder and 49 Klafters of "Lunt" (flamable material used in place of matches) costing 2 Schock, 3 Groschen, 3 Pfennig and a half tun (cask) of Beer -- which absolutely must be included."

Herr Christoph, called to Reichenberg from Röchlitz, built a guard- or watch-house for "6 Argent (silver) which was equal to about 15 Groschen and 3 Pfennigs.

The city expense record for 1661 reports:

Because general conditions require that the nightwatch, in particular, be carried out without difficulty and with the greatest diligence possible, it is decreed that three new city servants are herewith appointed primarily to undertake this task, namely Andreas Benisch, Andreas Melchior and Heinrinch Franz, and each receives a yearly wage (with the advance money for boots already given) of 12 florins.

In addition to acquisition of necessary clothing and equipment the nightwatch would always command attention from the city council if they were not serious enough in the way they undertook their duties. The city council "Sessions-Protokoll" for June 27, 1710 reports that "the city's servants or night watchmen are severely reprimanded and are reminded of the arrangements they have themselves agreed to. However, for some time now a certain laxness has been perceived in singing out or blowing horn signals on the hour all night long to the point of even missing (omitting) the nightwatch entirely. Unless we find otherwise, the resulting punishment will be that appropriate measures towards removal from the watch service shall be taken."

The following report appeared a short time later, on September 5, 1710: "in as much as the city watch is very badly carried out and mostly conducted by children if not omitted entirely, the lords elders of the community shall undertake exacting oversight and energetic inquiries."

During 1787 the existing city guards received an additional four night watchmen who earned an annual

wage of 50 florins plus 4 florins per year for a pair of boots, 1 florin, 15 kreuzers for a pair of stockings, and 1 florin for a pair of gloves. These sums of money came from assessments divided among the "relevant houses" of three classes of citizens. Along with those wages went the following outline of duties and responsibilities -- the "Instruktion" of the nightwatch -- drawn up by the community magistrate, the senior guild members, and by the combined citizenry in open public meeting on November 23, 1787:

1. ... that they lead a virtuous and sober life that is praiseworthy in all aspects. That they stand upright (at attention) before Magistrates as well as the lords elders of the local community and other cities, that they show dutiful obedience and should never enter a tavern during the nightwatch.

2. ...concerning alternating during the year, for the period of the six winter months from October 1 to the end of March to report every night at about 9:00 o'clock to places specified by the lords elders of the community, on time, and until 4:30 o'clock in the morning plus a quarter hour (there will be a special instrument [document] associated with the latter 1/4 hour provision), and for the remaining six summer months, that is April, May, June, July, August and September, reporting around 9:30 o'clock in the evening until 3:30 o'clock in the morning with the same regular calls (signals) on the hour and quarter hour.

3. In the case that a fire is discovered in the city at night or any other time, which is undiscovered by those within the house, the neighborhood should be immediately lined up into a fire- fighters "bucket brigade" without delay, but when the danger spreads farther (from which God mercifully protects us) to call out the fire alarm as quickly as possible and join up with the fire fighters.

4. On each of these same (watchmen) lies the responsibility to patrol the district assigned him each night and in particular to look out diligently for the various bands of thieves. Should it happen to be a case of "neighboring borrowers" who attract attention during the quiet hours, then assistance should be sought at once from the community to do what can be done to arrest the guilty and bring about the proper punishment.

5. Every night all sorts of reprobates and otherwise boisterous people loiter in the streets who should first be tactfully but earnestly admonished to conduct themselves quietly, but if they do not obey, with the least provocation they shall be placed under arrest. Should they offer resistance then notice will be given the city magistrates or next-in-line city leader. However, in the latter case should the culprits run away the city council will have to decide the appropriate

further punishment for those people.

6. The manner in which a praiseworthy person acts: The city council and then the lords elders of the city and the guilds as well as an honorable community (citizenship) provide these four night watchmen with approved wages, and the watchmen should then follow most exactly their fit and proper obligations (duty). However should one be guilty of disobedience or negligence, whether it be one or the other he shall be immediately dismissed from service and replaced by one with strongest rights (seniority) in the reserves.

7. In addition, as soon as a night watchman has warning of a fire in one of the surrounding villages he must take himself immediately to the bell tower to signal the fire. For that purpose the city gate tower with the small bell (which has long been used to signal fires in the surrounding villages) will ring the warning (storm) signal. The nightwatchman will also be responsible to notify the citizens with the following phrase: "The fire is in a village!" (so as not to frighten the city- dwellers by shouting the single word, "fire!") in order to facilitate requisition of fire fighters and equipment for the village residents.

8. Should circumstances arise that there is adequate cause for a guard to leave service then the citizens and the watchman are free to select another who is fit to serve within four weeks time during which the other continues to serve.

9. Any watchmen who must commit to take charge of the lower district is also responsible to see that, under no circumstances, should the residents in his charge avoid paying these volunteer night watchmen each of whom has the watch for certain hours and must patrol as far down as the other side of the "Spittelmühlhof" (hospital mill house) at least three times each night and to signal on the hour with a horn.

10. Should a night watchman leave the service all of the special clothing which he has not personally used shall be returned and he shall be instructed to hand these over to the newly employed replacement watchman.'

The nightwatch was given extra income in the form of "Bierfahren" (beer allowance) as long as it did not interfere with their duties. In Reichenberg as well as in other cities the nightwatchmen were often exposed to pleasant teasing from tavern guests who would cheerfully offer them a glass of beer which they must decline. They frequently complained in reports to the city council that their horns and signal songs were mocked with bad imitations or that a drunken person would call out after them: "Any dog could sing as well!" and similar insults. Eventually all those guilty of such transgressions were threatened with "public work" as punishment.

In 1793 the city council decreed -- with the district governments permission -- that the nightwatch be issued "ordinary" (regular) bayonets so that "no one would be easily tempted to assault these persons."

In 1823 the number of city guards/night watchmen in Reichenberg increased by eight. Four of them earned 60 florins annually paid from the city treasury. The rest of them were given rights to some land which generated rents from residents of 10 kreuzers, 15 kreuzers and 25 kreuzers annually and which yielded a sum total of 1355 florins by 1845.

According to a notice dated at the end of December, 1831, the furnishings and equipment for these eight men which were provided by the city included: Eight nightwatch lanterns of tin (sheet metal), four large lanterns for night-visitations, one iron oven with smokestack for the "Wachzimmer" (guard room), a table, a bench, two stools, eight "Hellebarden" (a kind of broad axe), and eight brass nightwatch whistles (fifes).

When Christianstadt was joined with Reichenberg in 1850, the combined city took over the current wages of the two watchmen of Christianstadt who earned 80 florins a year.

On January 12, 1869 the "Stadtverordneten-Kollegium" took notice that besides the ten city night watchmen there were an additional 18 maintained privately in the vicinity. They were employed in particular by factory owners.

A new regulation regarding the city nightwatch was under consideration but after the adjournments of the "Kollegium" on November 20, 1883 and April 30, 1884, the civilian nightwatch of the city was disbanded and those duties were taken over by the police.

In 1905 Paul Ludwig Schmidt set up a "Watch and Security" union in Reichenberg which was based on the system then in use in Germany. This group undertook most of the guard and security work for the "Deutschb"hmischen" exhibition in Reichenberg in 1906.

# Gymnasium Workout

by Frank Koerner

A story is told about Otto von Bismarck, who unified the fragmented German nation in 1870. After the unification, he was to make his first public speech to the newly constituted German Parliament. A wealthy, American heiress and German-ophile, journeyed by steamer from America to Berlin to hear the first words of the first German chancellor. She brought a translator with her. On the scheduled day, the lady and her translator sat in the public gallery as Bismarck rose to the podium and began to speak. Bismarck spoke eloquently in flowery rhetoric. The translator said nothing. Bismarck continued. The translator remained mute. The concerned American leaned towards her translator and inquisitively whispered, "What is he saying?" The translator replied, "I don't know. He didn't get to the verbs yet."

Language scholars expound upon how closely German and English are related. We accept their learned premises. Then one day, we might have to be able to allow a German sentence to exist (such as this one) that contains a dependent clause, whose result will involve six consecutive verbs at sentences end. [Dann m ten wir eines Tages einen deutschen Satz, der mit einem Nebensatz ausgestattet ist und dessen Ergebnis mit sechs aufeinanderfolgenden Verben am Ende des Satzes verbunden sein wird, stehen lassen kennen.]

Idioms are a special problem. Most of them are expressed differently. Often, the same idiom exists, but merely in a different form. "Putting the cart before the horse" becomes "das Pferd hintern Wagen spannen" or "putting the horse behind the cart".

Four categories of words present themselves. First, are words that are clearly different in the two languages. For example, "Gelegenheit" isn't even close to "opportunity". Second, are words that are identical and pronounced almost identically in both languages, clearly indicating their closeness in meaning. Words such as Arm (arm), Butter (butter), Finger (finger) are this type. Third, are words that are spelled identically or similarly, but are pronounced slightly differently. This muddies the waters, although the words have the same meaning in both languages. Words like Marmalade (marmalade), Republikaner (republican), and Ammoniak (ammonia) are in this group. Finally, there are words that are spelled similarly and pronounced similarly, but mean something ENTIRELY DIFFERENT in the other language. This final, perplexing group contains words such as bekommen (sounds like "become" or "becoming", but means "get" or "receive"), eventuell (sounds like "eventual", but means "if possible"), Gymnasium (sounds like gymnasium, but means a type of

school), and vor (sounds like "for", but means "ago" as in "two weeks ago").

The last genre typically poses problems for both German and English speakers, who are dealing in their other language. Difficulties usually occur in impulse situations, when quick, reactive recall is necessary. Then, the meaning that predominates is usually that of the mother language. For example, a German acquaintance and his spouse, an English teacher, were on a first trip to the USA. Upon their arrival in New York, the wife watched helplessly as her luggage disappeared on a dolly into an "Unclaimed Baggage" room. In the excitement of the moment she blurted out, "Wait, I want to become that suitcase!"

Of course, it is true that German and English are related. However, sometimes the connection is quite obscure. Often, it appears the languages are very distant cousins, who are barely on speaking terms.

## From Meinetschlag to Nebraska

There was much talk as Christmas approached in 1875 -- maybe it was 1876 -- about the hushed-up secret plans being made by the son of a farmer, Johann Kramper, whose name was also Johann, along with his sweetheart, Resi Wenein, to journey to America. Johann Kramper, owner of the "Housschneider Hofes" called a single son, Johann, and three daughters his own. His daughter, Anna, became the "Schneidermichalin" [mistress of Schneidermichal - Hof] and was then known as Quas [a married name], Marie became the wife of the owner of the "Blatterbauer" farm, Vulgo Goschperin, and Resi [short for Teresa] probably married the baker named Gubo from Kaplitz. Johann Kramper's brother, Peter, had already emigrated to America and in 1875 he already owned two farms. He held one which he would immediately turn over to his brother if Johann should ever come to the States. However, Johann was inherently somewhat cautious and suspicious and had little sense of adventure and could not bring himself to sell house and home in Meinetschlag and emigrate to a foreign land.

He also lacked the necessary courage. It was decided that his son should go look around over there first and see if it appeared to be all right. So young Johann undertook the journey to America -- but he also had another motive. His father's farmstead was burdened by heavy debt. No wonder that the Weneins disapproved of a marriage between their daughter and the heavily mortgaged Hausschneider-Hof. It was their opinion that even the grandest dowry would not be enough to save the property.

The two lovers thus saw emigration as the only possibility that they might still become a married couple. So they decided to go to the uncle in America and get married there. However, Johann had to promise his bride to bring her back as soon as possible so that she could ask her mother's forgiveness. Johann gave his promise and so the necessary preparations for departure were made.

On the first day of Christmas in 1875 or 1876 everything was ready. The young couple went to Vespers together and then set out towards Kaplitz and the wide world before them. They waited for darkness in a room that had been reserved in advance.

Ever since 1945 the passports they used have been the property of Franz and Marie Hausl (Hausschneider Ritschl.) The registration on them read: "The named person is traveling with his sister, Theresia, from Meinetschlag to Kaplitz and throught the German States to America. He has fulfilled his military obligation."

Now Theresia was certainly not Johann's sister and he had not served in the military at all. That was certainly known by the "Passamt" [passport control] personnel. Fortunately, Johann's father had once been "Vorsteher" and knew the people who were in charge of passport control very well and Johann must have used these connections to get by.

After staying overnight in Kaplitz, Johann and Resi traveled to Bremen the next day. There they learned that the ship they had expected to take to America had sunk and they would have to wait a whole week for the next one. Now it became quite apparent that Johann was ridden by concerns and doubts about the whole enterprise. He suggested that instead of going to America they should got to relatives in Vienna, get married there and then return to Meinetschlag. But he had underestimated his Resi. "Not on your life!" she said with great resolve and determination. "You said we would go to America and that is where we are going!" So they boarded the next ship.

The passage lasted two weeks. Stormy weather and sea-sickness made Johann most miserable. Resi, on the other

hand, did not complain. She worked in the kitchen and earned all of her meals in that manner.

From New York the couple took the train to the end of the line and from there they had to go quite some distance on foot. The innkeeper with whom they spent the last night of their journey had his Negro go with them part of the way and point them in the right direction. They breathed a great sigh of relief when they finally reached the uncle's farm in Jakson [sic.] Nebraska.

The pair entered the house with the prayerful greeting from the homeland, "Gelobt sei Jesus Christus!" [Praised be Jesus Christ!]. As the uncle led them both inside he answered: "In Ewigkeit, Amen. [For ever and ever, amen.] You are certainly my brother's son!"

These industrious people were able to work the farm quite successfully. Johann worked on the fields and meadows and Resi worked in the house and did the cooking. The two of them ended up quite content and decided to remain in America for good. In the meantime they had also been married.

But after about half a year, Johann became seriously ill. The doctor confessed to his wife, Resi, that there was no medicine to fight this disease. Johann was emotionally sick -- suffering from a terrible homesickness. If he remained for much longer in Nebraska he would surely die. So, with heavy hearts, the young couple again packed their overseas trunks and head back home.

Since they returned home as a married couple, Resi's mother gave them her blessing and a generous dowry. With great industry and frugality the pair was able not only to pay off all of the debts of Johann's family farmstead but also to add a few hectares of ground to the property. Their marriage remained childless so they later adopted Johann, the son of Resi's sister who had taken over the "Wenein-Haus" -- their family farmstead. This adopted son received the surname Hausl-Kramper. Johann Hausl-Karmper took over the "Hausschneider-Hof" during the First World War and farmed the property until 1945. Johann and Resi Kramper still felt too vigorous to retire at that time. In 1918 they purchased the Weinberger House, made it their residence and worked the land as usual. Johann Kramper, died in 1929 and his wife, Resi died in 1944.

In 1894 Maria Quas, daughter of the "Schneidermichalin," didn't dare to undertake that same passage that her uncle Johann and her aut Resi had taken two decades before. She traveled across the sea to her great uncle in Nebraska. She went to Vienna and earned her living as a cook. But it had always been her wish that that of her grandfather, Johann, to emigrate to America. So she wrote to the great-uncle, Peter

Kramper, in Jakson, Nebraska, that she wanted to come there if he would take her in. When she arrived in New York she wore a gray dress with a rose trim. How much courage it must have taken to drive such folk who were "poor as churchmice" to cross the "grossen Teich" [great pond] and try their luck in a foreign land!

In the meantime more than a hundred years has passed since Peter Kramper emigrated and two young folk had traveled to America and married while there. The story of these immigrants continues to 1985 -- a story in which chance played a large part, as often happens in real life. The expression "Wie klein ist doch die Welt!" ["It's a small world after all!"] would seem to be quite appropriate for the events that followed.

Elisabeth Gangl wrote to the wife of Josef Peters (Zirnetschlag): "In 1985, my nephew, minister Josef Handl from Georgsgemu"nd in Franconia went to visit his sister, Matilda Handl, who was a Benedictine missionary and prioress in Norfolk, Nebraska. In conversations with her my nephew learned that a family named Kramper with roots in Meinetschlag in the Bohemian Forest still lives there and they still have old letters from ancestors and relatives in the old home. Minister Handl brought copies of these letters to Germany and gave them to his aunt, Elisabeth Gangl in Bopfingen.

The letters included one which Johann Kramper wrote in 1899 to his brother Peter. It told of his wife's illness, of a long rainy spell and flooding that followed, and about the declining economic situation of the farmers due to high taxes and rising prices. Johann also mentions that a liter of beer was quite expensive -- it had risen in price by as much as 4 Kreuzer. He adds, "Wie soll dann der arme Mensch noch leben?" [How can a poor person continue to live?] Such a remark easily brings a smile to one's face. The cost of beer was dear to the old man because he was one of the biggest consumers of beer in Meinetschlag. Others would have been more concerned about the rising price of food at that time.

Initially the emigrants never wrote of language difficulties. But the villages of the Bohemian Forest have become foreign places to the last generation in Nebraska and no one speaks German any more.

# 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

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## Music

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### **"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**

# Rootsweb Electronic Mailing List

Dear list,

As a former Sudeten German I have lately read some list comments with the greatest of interest. Heide Lee's: her Dad is still bitter over the expulsion and he cannot talk about some things. Elfriede Grillmair said, her relatives never talked about their horrible experiences and she can only now guess the extent of their sufferings after learning history from the Internet. And there is Lavrentiy (Laurence) Krupnak who seems to be very angry, his short reply to Stephen G. Mueller is a reminder of the German atrocities towards the inhabitants of Lidice, a razed Czech village. L.'s anger is very evident in another reply to Stephen. Stephen expressed what he had seen in the Czech lands, and it certainly is not his fault that the country is in the shape

it is in. Why should he not be allowed to express his opinions? I can see that you, Laurence, feel a lot of pain, so why can you not be sympathetic to other people's pain? I am convinced that Stephen would have loved to report that the Czech lands are beautiful and prosperous; I believe his report was simply factual.

Like in every other area of life, we have to make choices here how we took at history. Will we look at it in a rational, detached way, or should we bury it and ignore it, or should we even distort it?

History looked upon in an honest way should help us to a better understanding of ourselves, mankind, situations etc. and should incite us to improve and to do better. It should help us to become a healing force. My parents, brother and I, as a young girl, were forcefully removed out of Czechoslovakia in 1945. I cannot allow myself to carry Hitler's atrocities and connected guilt feelings on my shoulders and strike out in anger at others. Besides, we had too many Czech friends and customers in those bygone days and with those too many good memories are in my mind.

But there are also the memories of that fateful early July morning, when the 4 Czech soldiers (one female) entered our home forcefully with drawn guns and told us, "out in 15 minutes!" "Give us your bankbooks, your jewelry!" The memory of the woman opening wardrobes and cupboards taking out what she pleased and pocketing what she liked (how much did she turn over to the government?). The memory of the man sent by the Czech government to take over our business and all commercial money a few weeks before that is also deeply embedded in my memory. The wailing cries of my mother, her tears and sorrowful words: "You are stealing my and my husband's life-work!" still echo in my ears. Forgive me, Laurence,

that is still potent grief in my heart! I understand Heidi's dad very well and my sympathy is with Elfriede's relatives.

But there is also grief for Lidice, for the victims of the concentration camps, for the Sudeten Germans who died and were mistreated in Czech concentration camps, but most of all for the human condition, the atrocities from men to men and the never ending retaliations, the anger and wrath, and the wish of "getting even". I often cry now about these things as I am approaching 70. I can feel MY parents' pain actually, also my own and all of those that were afflicted in a very deep way. My children have told me that for many years I had a very stoic attitude about my past experiences, and of course, that was actually the only way that I could cope with my losses. Now many compounded grieves are being released. But I also wish many times that things could have stayed the way they were before Hitler invaded us or even before 1945. But what an unrealistic and futile thought that is!

Maybe the greatest grief is that mankind never wants to learn from past experiences. We bear guilt, where we should have none. We cannot change the past, we can only learn from it. We need to forgive and do better. We need to learn that we cannot lump everybody into the same mold. There were good Czechs who were appalled at what the Czech government did, there were good Germans who felt the same way about Hitler. We need to work on forgiveness, caring and loving our fellow-man. We need to look at each individual and take him or her at their own merits. Nevertheless, we must look at the realities of history in a detached and realistic fashion, and we must have the same attitude where it concerns current situations and events.

You know, we have many diverse and ethnic groups in this country, who insist on keeping their distinctiveness, so there is a great possibility, that some day some very similar things may happen in this country. Ethnic cleansing has quite an appeal to some people in this land of ours! So, accept the facts that historians have unearthed and learn from it so that things like that will never happen again.

Now let me add to this that I am mostly a cheerful and happy person, seeing that a lot of bad has turned into a lot of good over the years. I also have a great sense of humor which has helped me tremendously over the years. But this is a serious letter and I send this with the hope that frustrations will be dispelled.

Sincerely,  
Helga M. Blackstone  
in East Texas

# NOAH'S ARK ENCOUNTERS THE MAYFLOWER

by W. Robert Chapman  
rchapman@mail.cc.trincoll.edu

In my job as a reference librarian I frequently encounter people who are searching for their family roots. One thing I've noticed is that most of these amateur genealogists say they are descended from a single ancestor. "My people came over on the Mayflower," the researcher might say, seemingly oblivious to the enormity of such a claim. "All of your ancestors?" one might reasonably ask. Not likely. The Mayflower wasn't big enough. An aircraft carrier might not hold all of one's 17th-century ancestors. If I were to try to fit in all of the people from whom I'm directly descended who were alive in 1620, I'd need an ark that could hold 512 pairs of eighth great-grandparents. And only a handful is likely to have the surname CHAPMAN.

What they really mean is that they are searching for a single ancestral line. Often it is the researcher's paternal line, or they are trying to prove their lineage in order to qualify for membership in a hereditary society. Having done such a narrow search, the person can now confidently claim to being descended solely from something like the ancient and noble house of St. Swithins in the Swamp. The fact that one is also descended from grave robbers, muleskinners, or librarians seems irrelevant once one has qualified to join the Sons of [fill in the blank]. In fact, the researcher has only scratched the surface of his or her ancestral research.

We are descended from a lot more people than most of us can imagine. That shouldn't be all that surprising when you consider that ancestry is exponential. You start with two parents, each of whom also had two parents (now we're up to four ancestors), etc. Five generations back, each of us is descended from eight pairs of second great-grandparents (sixteen lines).

Each of us is 10 generations removed from 256 pairs of seventh great-grandparents. By the time we are 15 generations removed, we are descended from 16,384 couples. Twenty generations back each of us theoretically can trace our ancestries to 524,288 sets of seventeenth great-grandparents (that's 1,048,576 lines).

What does this all mean? For the statistically inclined, it is likely that each of us could be related to a lot of strangers, possibly including the folks next door or the person we took to the high school prom (giving new meaning to the term "kissing cousins").

The likelihood of being at least distantly related to a neighbor greatly increases with each generation as we spin off new branches, particularly in societies that -- unlike the American -- were relatively stable and homogeneous, such as 15th-century England, 17th-century New England, and 19th-century South Carolina, areas where many of my ancestors lived. Folks in such areas tended to marry neighbors and cousins.

Family trees work both upward and downward. If going back 16 generations means that one is descended from 32,768 people, think how many descendants each of those ancestors has. In researching only one line from my wife's family, I have uncovered more than 1,500 people descended either by blood or marriage from a 16th-century Englishman. Assuming he is representative of most heads of Elizabethan English families, multiply those 1,500 descendants by the 32,768 people representing 13 generations, and one is faced with the possibility of being related to more than 49 million people.

Using that arithmetic, one could easily be related to a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker, or that cute young thing you've been working up the courage to ask out on a date. So if you were wondering why we tend to marry people who look and act a lot like ourselves, this might offer at least a partial explanation.

Maybe now the term "family of mankind" makes a bit more sense.

[W. Robert Chapman is a reference librarian at the Hartford Public Library.]

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