



# The Bukovina Society of the Americas NEWSLETTER

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sawelisch@juno.com

Assistant Editor: Oren Windholz  
Winholz@bukovinasociety.org

Web Site: [www.bukovinasociety.org](http://www.bukovinasociety.org)



## BUKOVINA PEOPLE AND EVENTS

- We welcome the two newest members of the Society's Lifetime Club: William Armbrister, Wichita, KS and Stephen A. Rilling, Alamosa, CO
- Officers elected at the last meeting of the Board of Directors are Ralph Honas, President; Ray Haneke, Vice President; Martha McLelland, Secretary; and Bernie Zervas, Treasurer.
- The September 2005 issue of the *Newsletter* failed to identify the author of the article about the Nemecek-Rourke reunion as Steve Parke, Pueblo, CO. The picture of the Hartl couple on page 4 contained an error in the spelling of Bertha's maiden name, which is Schindelar.
- This issue of the *Newsletter* is the first phase of changes in format. It was mailed without an envelope as a cost saving measure. The second change, possibly next year, will be to use bulk rate postal service in the US. These two cost savings will allow us to move to an eight-page format, thus allowing for more articles and pictures.
- Eleanore Dempster, Osoyoos, BC, Canada sent the Society and 118-page bound book entitled *The Rudolf Vollhoffer Family* as well as a compact disc with several hundred family pictures. Mrs. Dempster published the book in July of 2005. The CD contains a title page with a guide to the pictures contained in two sections: the Rudolf Vollhoffer family and the Strong Family. The Board of Directors wished to congratulate the author on the compilation of this great family history and to express its sincere appreciation for her generous contribution to the Society's archives.

## THE HOMELAND BOND

by Luzian Geier, Editor, *Der Südostdeutsche* (Augsburg, Germany)

For the past fifty-six years the homeland newspaper, *Der Südostdeutsche* (*The Southeast German*) has been the closest bond to unite our compatriots through the publication of information about Bukovinians worldwide. Issues including history, traditions and achievements in the old and new homeland, themes about the past and the future of our cultural community as well as the contemporary situation in Bukovina are discussed on a regular basis. Moreover, this monthly publication informs its readers about the happenings in our

regional and overseas associations, thus permitting us to maintain a global community of fellowship. We ask you to subscribe to our newspaper, which, among other purposes, will enable the younger generation to learn of the heritage, traditions, and concerns of our former homeland and to share a common unifying experience.

Annual subscription cost: 30 Euros

Mailing Address: *Der Südostdeutsche*  
Alter Postweg 97 a  
86159 Augsburg  
Germany

Tel: (0821) 5 89 30, FAX (0821) 58 26 50

## 2005 FEEFHS CONFERENCE

by Michael Augustin (Leonberg, Germany)

With the topic "Dare to Discover: Exploring Central and Eastern European Ancestry," the Federation of East European Family History Societies (FEEFHS), in conjunction with its partner societies, the Germanic Genealogy Society and the Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe, held its 11th international conference in Saint Paul, Minnesota between August 19-21, 2005. Established in 1992, FEEFHS, an umbrella organization for societies committed to the study of history and genealogy of the various nationalities in Central and Eastern Europe, includes several associations, which focus on German regional groups. Among these are the German-Bohemian Heritage Society, the Minnesota Pommern Group, the North Star Chapter of Minnesota Germans from Russia, and the Bukovina Society of the Americas. Member organizations are posted at <http://www.feefhs.org/members-web.htm>

Under the co-chairmanship of Paul Sternberg and Kent Cutkomp, the program committee arranged for a wide variety of lectures (94 in all) over the three-day period. A detailed syllabus offered the guests a synopsis of the presentations and a list of the speakers with their specific topics. Between sessions the guests were free to peruse the various exhibits, vendor tables and back issues of the FEEFHS

*Journal* in the main foyer of the Four Points Sheraton, the hotel at which the conference was held.

More than 300 people attended the conference, including four members of the Bukovina Society who made formal presentations. Irmgard Ellingson spoke on "Galician and Bukovina German Genealogy" and "The Ethnic and Religious Nature of Austria-Hungary," while Michael Augustin, Sophie Welisch and Werner Zoglauer discussed "The Bukovina German Experience 1919-1955: Resettlement, Flight and Expulsion," with each speaker focusing on one chronological period.

The next FEEFHS conference is tentatively scheduled for 2007 in Chicago.

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## **The Kozsan/Molnar/Kajtar/ Lovasz Hungarian Reunion**

by Andrea Kozan Phan (Poway, CA)

Between July 30-31, 2005 a large group of descendants of the Kozsan/Molnar/Kajtar/ Lovasz families assembled for their first gathering in Saskatchewan, Canada to honor their Bukovina Székely heritage. The first day's events were held in Cupar, and then continued the following day at the Hungarian Club Hall in neighboring Regina.

Over 200 family members traveled from the Canadian provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Quebec as well as from California, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, Tennessee and Oregon in the United States to reminisce, meet new family members, and learn more about their Székely Hungarian heritage. Scheduled events included a presentation on the Székely Hungarians from Bukovina, Hungarian dancers, Hungarian bands, horse and wagon rides, tours to cemeteries and homesteads, and good Hungarian cooking.

The Kozsan/Molnar/Kajtar/Lovasz families originating from the Székely villages of Istensegíts and Hadikfalva in Bukovina immigrated to Cupar between 1907-1926. At about this same time we also find Hungarians from the Székely Bukovinian villages of Foganjisten, Józseffalva and Andrásfalva settling in Cupar. The Székely had founded these five villages in Bukovina in 1785-86.

Due to great distances separating the families and their large numbers, some uncles met their nieces and nephews for the first time; others met cousins known previously only by name. It proved to be a touching experience for all attendees.

Through the research of Elizabeth Long and Rudolf Laszlo (see "The Bukovina Székely Genealogy Project" in the Bukovina Society's *Newsletter*, Vol. 13, No. 4, December 2003, pp 4-6), two family trees including all attendees could be developed. One family tree, extending over 33 feet when posted, originated with Imre Kozsan. Born in 1739, Imre migrated from Transylvania to Bukovina and participated in the founding of the village of Istensegíts. The second family tree for the descendants of Andras Molnar born in 1763, reached over 20 feet. Each attendee was asked to highlight his/her box on one of the trees.

We greatly appreciate the ability to connect with people who one year ago did not know of their relationship to each other. Some of the networking resulted from the posting of messages on the Bukovina Society's website, [www.bukovinasociety.org](http://www.bukovinasociety.org).

The Kozsan/Molnar/Kajtar/Lovasz "Convention" was a great success. It can be safely stated that the participants found the experience to be both fulfilling and exhilarating and that they look forward to continued contacts with their newly discovered relatives.

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## **A TRIBUTE**

by Sophie A. Welisch (Congers, NY)

It is with sadness and regret that we learn of the resignation of Oren Windholz as President of the Bukovina Society. At the helm since its founding in 1988, Oren has spearheaded many of the Society's projects and activities over his seventeen years in office. Under his aegis the Bukovina Society has become firmly established with a headquarters building in Ellis, KS, a museum, an archival collection housed in the library of Fort Hays University, numerous publications, a web site, and a quarterly *Newsletter*.

As the area in the USA with the highest concentration of Bukovina Germans, Kansas was early identified as the location most suited for the Society's permanent headquarters. Following his trip to Bukovina and a visit with leading figures in the *Landmannschaft der Buchenlanddeutschen* (Augsburg, Germany), invitations went out in 1989 for the first conference of scholars and laymen interested in promoting the history and culture of Bukovina. Numerous conferences followed in the intervening years during which Oren and his wife Pat opened their home to out-of-town guests.

Oren has authored numerous articles about Society matters, which have been published in journals and newspapers in the United States and Germany; in addition, he has been a speaker at conventions in both the USA and abroad. To facilitate the smooth and efficient functioning of the Society one could always rely on Oren promptly to respond to the considerable volume of correspondence, which crossed his desk and his computer. Through his efforts contacts were made and maintained with other cultural institutions including FEEFHS and our counterpart organization in Brazil, the *Associação Alemã-Bucovina de Cultura - ABC* in Rio Negro, Brazil.

The Board of Directors, the International Board, the membership, and all those whose lives Oren has touched over the years wish to express their heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all he has done for the Society and its advancement. We look forward to continued collaboration with Oren and at the same time extend to Ralph Honas, his successor in office, our congratulations and best wishes for a fruitful presidency.

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## **THE PEKAR/BAKER/BEKAR FAMILY REUNION IN CHILLIWACK, BC**

by Joe and Kathy Rieberger (Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada)

This year witnessed another successful family reunion of the descendants of Josef and Ludvina Pekar, who in 1912 immigrated to Saskatchewan, Canada from Paltinossa, Bukovina. The first reunion took place in Creston, BC in 1965 in celebration of Sister Rose Bekar's silver jubilee as a Sister of Providence. Sister Rose is the fifteenth child of Josef and Ludvina and the last of her siblings. We were delighted that she was able to attend the Chilliwack reunion and to entertain us by a reading of her memoirs as a nursing sister. In the near future Sr. Rose plans to retire to the motherhouse in Kingston, Ontario. Gilberte Baker, who lives in Kanata, Ontario, is the last living in-law of this generation but was unable to attend.

Approximately 200 family members gathered at the 2005 reunion including an American cousin, Bill Carr and his wife Jean from Indianapolis, Indiana. Bill is the grandson of Mathias Pekar and Marie Hicke, who emigrated from Paltinossa in 1903. Barney Baker from Kanata, Ontario, traveled the furthest from within Canada. Joan Galey, daughter of Clem Bekar, presented a twenty-two page booklet on the history of the Pekar family. In addition, there were numerous items for sale including tee shirts, caps with the family name and crest, plaques, key chains and various other memorabilia. A CD with family photos will soon be available.

Since 1965 the family reunions have been held every five years in different provinces of Canada with the next one scheduled in 2009 near Calgary, Alberta. A centennial celebration of Josef and Ludvina's arrival in Canada will take place in 2012.

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## MY VISIT TO VOLOCA, BUKOVINA

by Jim Ursulak (Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada)

I turned 72 on June 13, 2005.

About twenty years ago, shortly after I got my first computer, I created a spreadsheet and was the first Ursulak to construct our family tree using a computer. Later I obtained a genealogy program and over the years greatly expanded and shared the information with relatives. This hunting for roots also created an itch. "Some day," I mused, "I may actually see the town where my father was born." I once casually expressed this wish to my son and to my surprise he indicated that he would like to join me as it would be an excellent experience for both of us. Two years later, in May 2004, I scratched that itch and saw Voloca, Bukovina, the birthplace of my father. In 1897, the year he was born, Bukovina belonged to Austria-Hungary. In 1918, after World War I, it was turned over to Romania and remained so until the end of World War II when Russia again redrew the border and incorporated northern Bukovina into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

My father was three years old when he came to Canada and like many others, his family had no papers when they passed through immigration. In 1939 dad applied for a copy of his birth certificate to obtain proof of age to confirm a bona fide registration in Canada. As a youngster I was puzzled by the fact that my dad was "Austrian" although our family was clearly Romanian. These border shifts explain why his birth certificate, issued in 1939, bears a Romanian postage stamp.

Jimmy, my only son, is an experienced globetrotter. As a field sound engineer for television productions his profession has taken him around the world many times. (He currently works with film crews that produce the popular episodes of *Survivor* and *Amazing Race*.) His work once took him to Moscow where he spent several months and acquired a working knowledge of the Russian language. Jimmy has reached the point where he can communicate with Russians or Ukrainians well enough to act as an interpreter. I, on the other hand, except for "*dobra, dobra*" can't speak Ukrainian and just know a few words in Romanian. It was no longer spoken in my family when I came on the scene.

Jimmy took care of all the preparations and used his regular travel agent Myrna Arychuk of Times Square Travel Ltd in Richmond, BC to make our bookings. On May 6th, Jimmy and I headed for the old

country. We flew to Heathrow, London, rested overnight, and then continued on to Kiev the next day. I have traveled quite a bit and have flown on many different airlines but after this trip, I wouldn't hesitate to say that British Air is the only way to fly!

We were met at the Kiev airport by our personal tour guide Svetlana and her driver who were booked for us by Jimmy's travel agent. She took us everywhere to see the sights of Kiev. I am a musician and particularly wanted to see the Great Gate of Kiev, which is musically depicted in Moussorgsky's classic *Pictures at an Exhibition*. This ancient structure is still standing and is known as "The Golden Gate."

That night we slept on a train from Kiev to Lviv. We had first class accommodations in a compartment for two. This, too, had been booked by Times Square Travel but after Lviv we would be on our own. We arrived in Lviv at 7:00 A.M. and considered taking either a train or bus to Chernivtsi [Czernowitz] but when a cab driver offered to drive us there for only \$75 Canadian we quickly accepted. It was a very interesting trip and signs of a growing economy in that region were evident. Many of the gasoline stations along the route are new (gas is 59 cents Canadian per liter) and every new home under construction was being built with red brick. There was lots of construction and many signs of expansion along the route. Still, I saw numerous elderly peasants along the way, sitting by the roadside waiting while the family cow grazed nearby on the free grass by the highway.

After a speedy comfortable three-hour ride, we arrived at Hotel Bukovina in the center of Chernivtsi. Room rates were incredibly cheap so we booked separate rooms. They were spacious with high ceilings and some included a balcony equipped with a table and chairs and flowers in the planter overlooking the front of the hotel. This large old five-story building was once used to accommodate KGB officials. My bathroom had an enormous deep tub with a hand-operated showerhead and a "different" version of a flush toilet. The hotel provided one tiny, tightly rolled packet of unbleached toilet paper. (I was glad that I had brought my own and kept their TP as a souvenir). The cost? Only \$28 Canadian per night, and this included breakfast! Obviously Chernivtsi has yet to be discovered in the tourist world.

Of course most items on the menu were tasty Ukrainian dishes so we had most of our meals in the hotel. The cost, with a 10 percent tip, was less than \$10 per person. This included a large bottle of excellent Ukrainian beer. Jimmy loves this city and wants to return. He wandered about by himself taking numerous photos with his camera and camcorder. Early every morning one will see elderly people, mostly women, sweeping the sidewalks and the cobblestone streets with handmade willow branch brooms. I was impressed at how clean the city appeared the day following May 9th, "Victory Day" (VE Day), a special day to celebrate the end of Nazi occupation. No litter but .....hmm, unfortunately spitting is still tolerated and evidently a common practice. I also noted that stray dogs of all sizes run freely about the city, even in Kiev.

The day after we arrived we planned to locate the regional archives building and inquire about my father's registration. I had a copy of his birth certificate, which in Romanian stated his birth as "1897, August 17" and his parents "Stefan a Nicolaea Ursuleac" and "Zoita nascuta Ili". We finally found the archives after searching all morning. There was an unexpectedly long queue of elderly folk in the waiting room, but we eventually got our turn to speak to an official. No luck. He directed us to the "other" archives building where the older records are kept.

Well, since we had not yet seen the village of Voloca, which is about a 15-minute drive away, we decided to take a cab and scout the town. Jimmy told the driver we would probably spend about ten minutes or so in Voloca and then return to our hotel. The village is beautifully nestled among rolling hills with farmland everywhere you looked. Our driver stopped to ask a local for directions to the town center. Jimmy took this opportunity to get out of the cab and he showed dad's birth certificate to an old fellow, explaining that our mission was to find out if any Ursulaks still lived in Voloca. This old guy's name was Teodor. His face lit up and he waved his arms about and instantly and loudly proclaimed that he would help us and, without invitation, jumped into our cab. For the next hour or so, he took us from house-to-house, field-to-field and presented dad's birth certificate and a large computer printout photo, which I also brought with me of Stefan and Zoita Ursuleac (my grandparents).

Most people he approached were quite old and noticeably dubious and uncertain. We gave it a good try and were ready to give up after about eight inquiries, but Teodor insisted "just one more place." He would not give up. Our patient cab driver silently just went along with the flow. Finally we struck gold when Teodor went into an old whitewashed, steep-roofed cottage, similar to farmhouses I had seen which belonged to my relatives when I lived in Manitoba in the thirties. This house had electricity but no plumbing.

He came out a moment later, his face beaming, and shouted loudly for us to come in while he frantically beckoned us with both arms. He found a ninety-year-old old woman whose maiden name was Domnica Ursuleac. Her daughter Maria and her husband also happened to be there. When Domnica saw the photo of Stefan she smiled and softly said, "This is my Uncle Stefan" and kissed the picture. I wish I could have captured that moment on video. What a stroke of luck that her vision was not impaired and she could recognize the features of the elderly couple in that photo! From that moment on, Jimmy and I were in the midst of jubilation. We were squeezed with hugs, and were kissed by women and men! There were tears of joy on all the faces. It was a magic moment that still brings a tear to my eyes when I think of it. Oh how I regretted that I could not understand Romanian!

I learned that Domnica's father Grigori, previously unknown to me, was Stefan's brother; therefore, Domnica and my father, who passed away in 1973, were first cousins. Well, it was a time to celebrate! This lovely, serene old lady, who was born and continues to live in this 100-year-old cottage, dropped to her knees and crawled across the floor and went under the kitchen table to some hiding place and came out smiling as she held up a large bottle of vodka. Maria disappeared for a while, then returned with a few plates of hurriedly prepared snacks while her husband kept our glasses charged with vodka and beer. In true old country fashion we were urged to eat, eat, eat!!

Maria's daughter, a schoolteacher, joined us, then Maria's sister Stella arrived on the scene. Poor Jimmy, the only one who could communicate, was deluged with questions and did his best to respond to all of those eager faces. He must have been doing a great job because they smiled and nodded with pleasure to his responses. Meanwhile outside, the cab driver waited and waited patiently for us. Ten minutes! Ha! About an hour or so later we emerged and intended to take Teodor to his home and then return to our hotel. Nope! He protested and loudly insisted that we accompany him to his "club." He wanted to introduce us and announce his personal triumph to his friends and to buy us a round. This resulted in more beer and vodka and Kielbassa etc., etc.

When we finally returned to our hotel, we paid the cab driver double the cab fare that he requested, so he too was happy with how the day had passed. We arranged to come back to Domnica's home the next day to meet more relatives.



*Domnica's House*

The next day we hunted for that "other archives building" in Chernivtsi, which turned out to be a large ancient church no longer used for that purpose. If we were prepared possibly to wait several hours (because this queue was even longer than that of the day before), perhaps we might get in and find my dad's registration. We waited for a while and then I said, "Why are we wasting our valuable time? We have already FOUND our relatives, so what more do we need?" At 1:00 P.M. our faithful cab driver took us back to Domnica's and we began another afternoon of excited chatter. We went from house to house and met more relatives stemming from Grigori Ursuleac. I met Domnica's other daughters, a granddaughter, a great-granddaughter and husbands, etc., etc.

I encountered numerous familiar names such as Gorda, Pentlichuk, Chescu. (One individual in particular, Nicolai Gorda, a dentist, has a brand new, exceptionally beautiful house so some members of his generation are doing quite well.) He said he had visited Chescu and Gorda families in Inglis and Russell, Manitoba about nine years ago. I said, "INGLIS ??? I was BORN in Inglis!!!" and that set off a new round of excitement and more questions.

One special moment during that second day was seeing the well that my grandfather had dug. His house is gone but the well is still there. The royal treatment we received and the numerous toasts with vodka overwhelmed us until we finally had to say our goodbyes. (On the way back Jimmy said, "Dad, I'm seeing double!") We returned loaded with gifts to take back to Canada. What an amazing experience. Only a few days earlier we didn't know each other and now we are family!

Further to explore and learn about this part of the country we decided to return to Lviv by bus rather than take a cab. It would be cheaper and certainly more interesting. We had front seats on a rickety old bus and rubbed elbows with all types of people as they got on and off at the many villages, and get this, the bus fare was only \$4.85 each for that eight-hour journey!

We again slept on an overnight train from Lviv to Kiev and next day flew back to Canada. Although our visit to Bukovina was brief and the trip a bit exhausting for someone my age, it was certainly worth every cent. I bought a memory, which both my son and I will cherish. I was the first member of my family to have visited Voloca.

# THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN BUKOVINA \*

by Otto Weber

Before the Austrian annexation of Bukovina, the Catholic Church exercised only an insignificant influence here. Until the Great Schism under the Patriarch Cerularius of Constantinople (1053) Bukovina had been incorporated into the Eastern Roman Church. The bishoprics of Sereth (Siret) and Baia, founded in 1370 and 1420 respectively, did not exist long. Founded in 1607, the bishopric of Bacau in Moldavia, which at that time included Bukovina, also soon closed its doors.

Only after Austrian military occupation in 1775 was Church life organized in Bukovina. Between 1775-1786 military chaplains served not only the occupation forces but the civilian population as well. When in 1786 Bukovina came under Galician administration, the deaconate of Czernowitz was founded and placed under the administration of the archdiocese of Lemberg [Lvov/Lviv]. The Catholic Church of Bukovina remained linked with Lemberg until the annexation of the province by Romania in 1920. With the concordat between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Romania (August 8, 1930), jurisdiction passed to the bishopric of Jassy (Iași). In the interim the deaconates of Suczawa (Suceava) and Radautz (Rădăuți) had been founded in 1847 and 1908 respectively. The external organization of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Bukovina had thus been established. In the course of time the first parishes were founded and gradually an active religious and Church life developed. This evolved in several stages.

Given the rapid increase in the number of the faithful in only a brief period of time, the activities of the military chaplains no longer sufficed to render the essential religious services. The archbishop of Lemberg must have seen this during his first visitation. Since at the same time the Jesuit Order had been banned in Russia, the brothers, for the most part Germans, settled in Bukovina and undertook pastoral duties, especially in southern Bukovina. Their first station was Gurahumora, from where they served the Catholics in the Moldavian Valley and beyond. After the dissolution of the Jesuits (1843), ministerial work passed to diocesan priests from Galicia. Only at the beginning of this century did an indigenous clergy arise, which was naturally better prepared to meet the needs of Bukovina. The frequent attempts to establish a separate diocese in Bukovina repeatedly failed. Nonetheless, the Catholic Church in Bukovina had a far-reaching native administration. It had its own vicar-general, who resided in Czernowitz.

While pastoral work initially took on a missionary character, it also began for the first time early in this century to develop a national orientation, the character of which was shaped by the intermingling of Polish, Armenian, Ruthenian and German Catholics. Although Catholicism in Bukovina had the stamp of the world Church, an active national life was unmistakable. Thus in 1907 a Catholic German youth club was founded in Czernowitz followed in 1913 by the Regional Association of German Catholic Youth with headquarters in Radautz. From this organization there arose a series of trade and lay associations based on religious principles.

Before the [1940] resettlement the following organizations were under the umbrella of the Central Association of German Catholics: (1) Book Consultation and Distribution Station, (2) Theater and Picture

Consultation Center, (3) Department of Lending Libraries, (4) Legal Consultation Center for Poor Compatriots, (5) Volunteer Work Service. In addition there existed the following central organizations: (1) Catholic German National Association for Bukovina, (2) Catholic German Orphanage Association for Bukovina, (3) Catholic German Press Division, (4) Regional Association of Catholic Youth in Bukovina (with 4 boys' congregations, 12 girls' congregations, 4 singles' clubs, 35 young girls' clubs, 39 adolescent girls' clubs, and 4 work communities of Catholic German youth), (5) Bukovina Boniface Club, (6) Diocesan Charity Club for Bukovina, (7) Catholic German School Organization for Bukovina, and (8) the Society for the Fostering and Advancement of Church Music.

Without direct linkage to the Central Association, there was also a Catholic German People's Bank for Bukovina and the Catholic German student fraternity, "Frankonia."

Through the associations there arose a secular and ethnic life, which was especially active among the German Catholics. The customs and practices were throughout religious. Many had been brought from the homeland and were zealously guarded, as for example the traditions relating to weddings, baptisms and funerals. The Church year was also replete with activities: Advent celebration, but especially the visits of the "singers" at Christmas and of the Three Kings on Three Kings' Day [January 6]. The blessing of homes on Three Kings' Day as well as putting up a Christmas tree were almost everywhere the practice and not only among the Germans. Shrove Tuesday celebrations, the Church dedication dance and the Katherine dance were established traditions. Church festivals held a special place. It was not only a time for pilgrimages, but also a welcomed opportunity to exchange visits among friends and relatives. On the principal pilgrimage day in Bukovina, the Feast Day of the Assumption (August 15), Catholics in their many thousands traveled to Kaczika (Cacica) in an expression of devotion to the Virgin Mary. There was not one village or town from which a majority did not participate. In the devotion to Mary they competed with the Romanians, who likewise gladly joined in. It must be emphasized that the religious harmony among all denominations and religions in Bukovina was exemplary. Even when several nationalities lived in one community, there were rarely significant disputes relating to ecclesiastical matters. The Catholics of Bukovina got along very well with people of other faiths. Often they shared a church building. There existed a peaceful co-existence from a national and religious point of view, which was not often seen elsewhere.

There are today few Catholics in Bukovina. The communities have been disrupted even if the outer organizational structure has remained intact.

It can only be hoped that the once flourishing seed will mature to a new harvest.

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\*Otto Weber, "Die deutsche Kirche im Buchenland: Die katholische Kirche," [The German Church in Bukovina: The Catholic Church in Bukovina] in *Bukowina: Heimat von Gestern*, eds. Erwin Massier, Josef Talsky and B. C. Grigorowicz, trans. Sophie A. Welisch (Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag "Arbeitskreis Bukowina Heimatbuch," 1958), pp.168-170.



Bukovina Society  
P.O. Box 81  
Ellis, KS 67637



## VOLLHOFFER COUSINS' GATHERING

by Eleanore Dempster (Osoyoos, British Columbia, Canada)

On August 19-21, 2005 a Vollhoffer cousins' gathering was held at Balgonie, Saskatchewan to celebrate the 102nd anniversary of Rudolf Vollhoffer's arrival in Canada, and the centennial of his marriage to his first wife, Eleonora Niznik, in April 1905 near Balgonie. Both Rudolf and Eleonora had emigrated from Bukovina: he from Alt Fratautz and she from Czernowitz. They met in August 1903 on board the *S. S. Adria* out of Hamburg, two strangers among hundreds of Bukovinian immigrants on their way to a new life in Canada.

Rudolf traveled with his brother Michael, and Michael's family as far as Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he disembarked, while the rest of the family continued to Balgonie. Rudolf then walked from Winnipeg, through North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, looking for a place to settle. His quest was unsuccessful, and he rejoined his brother at Balgonie in the spring of 1904, when he received entry to a homestead in that area. He continued to explore, however, and soon forfeited his entry in favour of land at Earl Grey, Saskatchewan. It was on this homestead that Rudolf and Eleonora resided until 1908, when they left the farm and relocated to Southey, Saskatchewan. A shoemaker/harness maker by trade, Rudolf opened his own

shop in Southey and earned a living in an occupation that served him well during his life in Canada.

A century later, three generations of Vollhoffer cousins, the descendants of Rudolf and his three wives, Eleonora Niznik, Petronella Hanel, and Marie Schultz, traveled from Ontario, British Columbia, and Washington to meet and reminisce. During the three-day period they visited locations in Balgonie, Southey, Earl Grey, and Regina where Rudolf and his families lived and worked and where numerous family members are buried. Albert Lamers of Southey was particularly helpful, giving generously of his time and knowledge. In the Southey Museum the cousins stepped into the era of their grandfather and found his name in various town records.

Twenty-one people attended the gathering, thirteen of whom were descendants of Rudolf (eight grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren). Over half the cousins had never previously met each other, which in itself was a reason to celebrate. Many joyful hours of story telling were followed by a Saturday night dinner, where everyone had an opportunity to share memories of their Vollhoffer parents and grandparents and where family-oriented door prizes were distributed. All who attended thoroughly enjoyed the event, which is now a happy family memory.