

The Bukovina Society of the Americas NEWSLETTER

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Membership Dues:

Lifetime \$150.00
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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

- Welcome to our newest life members #194, Peter Mannherz, Moos/Bodensee, Germany, and #195, Julian Filk, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- Fred Schuster, a Life Member of the Bukovina Society since 1993, passed away January 20, 2011, in Aurora, Colorado. He was born April 2, 1926, to Frank and Rosie (Aschenbrenner) Schuster of Ellis, Kansas.
- Reinhold Boschowitzki, died Dec. 22, 2010. He and his wife Margaret celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at the first Bukovinafest.
- We received the death notice of Clyde Schellhammer on July 12th, 2010 from his wife Agnes, both life members of the Society who attended every Bukovinafest. Agnes was also a participant on the 1996 tour to Bukovina. Agnes will be 85 on April 5, 2011 and said she plans to continue attending Bukovinafest as long as she is able.
- International Board member Wilf Uhren sent to the Society a copy of his family history book, *The Uhrens and Bieleckis*. The 462-page hard cover book will be available at the Society archives for anyone to read. I was a product of many years of research and assembly by Wilf and we congratulate him for his contribution to the base of Bukovina information and thank him for sharing it with us.
- Society board member Steve Parke has accepted a three-year term on the board of the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International. He has been a contributor to their publications and hopes to add input from a Kansas perspective. Steve was featured as a speaker for the Kansas Day program in WaKeeney on January 30 giving a program regarding the historic Kansas Czech settlements.

member has volunteered to take the role of the North American contact person. Meanwhile the Bukovina Institute lead by Lucian Geier is developing a tour plan. We will leave Munich on Monday, September 12th, and travel by tour bus through Austria and Hungary to Romania and the region of Bukovina. In Bukovina we will tour historical, cultural and rural and city sites in both Ukraine and Romania. The tour group will return to Munich on Friday, September 23rd, to attend the Oktoberfest. Once finalized, the locations of tour sites, accommodations and cost will be printed in a travel brochure and sent to those who have expressed an interest in the trip. To be placed on the mailing list, send an email to Steve at: sparke7261@q.com or write to him at PO Box 7261, Pueblo West, CO 81007.

BAVARIA'S POPULATION INCLUDES GERMANS FROM BUKOVINA

By: Irmgard Hein Ellingson

A flyer describing a 2010 lecture series presented by *Haus des Deutschen Ostens Muenchen* [HDO] and the *Bukowina-Institut* has been received by the Bukovina Society.

This series, *Why are we here? Bavaria's Population also comes from the eastern lands*, was intended for Bavarians who wanted to know more about their own origins or those of their parents and grandparents. It was prepared to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the *Bukowina-Institut* at the *Universitaet Augsburg*, the 40th anniversary of the *Haus des Deutschen Ostens* (HDO), and the 50th anniversary of the *Waldkraiburg* city and jurisdiction. The HDO is headed by our longtime friend Ortfried Kotzian, former head of the *Bukowina-Institut*, who attended our 1996 Bukovinafest in Ellis with his wife Marie Luise.

Germans from Bukovina, Bessarabia, and western Volhynia were resettled into the German *Reich*. Later, between 1944 and 1950, they were among the almost 2 million refugees and displaced persons who fled from parts of central, eastern, and southeastern

BUKOVINA TOUR 2011

Based on the response from our brief note in the last *Newsletter*, we have taken significant steps in the organization of a tour through the former Bukovina homeland. Steve Parke, a Society Board

Europe to Bavaria. There they participated in the reconstruction of Bavaria and its ongoing development. Their integration in German life and culture was probably the greatest social-political endeavor of the German Federal Republic in the post-war years.

Unfortunately the children and grandchildren of these people have only limited, fragmentary knowledge about the origins of their ancestors. Although place of origin is a vital part of human identity, few remember much, if anything, about places like Bukovina or Galicia. As such, they are very much like many Bukovina descendants in the U.S. and Canada.

The lecture series gave Bavarian citizens of all ages the opportunity to recall and learn more about their central and eastern European places of origin, including Bukovina.

It is always a pleasure to learn about the activities of our sister organizations abroad, and we thank them for sharing their news with us.

VIRTUAL BUKOVINA – AN ONLINE PROJECT

By: Irmgard Hein Ellingson

Alfred Wanza is the Webmaster of *Bukowina Freunde* [Bukovina Friends] at www.bukowinafreunde.de, which has been online and getting a lot of hits in the past year.

He was encouraged by Luzian Geier of the *Bukowina-Institut* to open a *Bukowiner Virtueller Friedhof*, or “virtual cemetery” on the website. People who have pictures of Bukovina cemeteries and gravesites can post them online via a Google photo link.

A number of pictures have already posted. Open www.bukowinafreunde.de and on the left side, click on *Fotogalerie/Mediathek*. At the top of the page is bukowinafreunde.de and further down is the heading **Kleine Fotogalerie...** Scroll further down the page to another heading, **Von Gaesten eingestellten Bilder** (photos posted by guests). Links to submitted historical and current photos of southern Bukovina (which includes Cacica, Putna, Vatra Dornei, Pojorata, Kirlibaba), Pojana-Mikuli village and cemetery, Schwarzhthal, Fuerstenthal, Bori, etc. appear below that.

More than 20 years ago, Paul Polansky took 2 dozen pictures in the Illischestie cemetery for me. These will soon be scanned and also posted in an album in the virtual cemetery.

We thank *Herr Wanza* and *Herr Geier* for their development of *Bukowina Freunde* and the virtual cemetery project!

ONCE UPON A TIME

By: Regina Schröcker née Binder (Kirchdorf am Inn, Austria)

My Native Village. My life began on September 20, 1932 in Poiana Micului (Buchenain), in the district of Kimpolung, Bukovina. However, this date is not correct. I was actually born on September 19. At that time it was not that easy to record the birth of a child. The distance to the registration office was far and had to be traversed on foot, which often took several days, or longer.

Sometimes the birth of a child was actually registered weeks after its birth. In late summer the harvest took priority and one could simply not take two days to travel to the city in order to report a birth. In the winter the cold weather often made this journey virtually impossible.

This was also the case with my birth. My father told the registrar that I had been born that very same day. Had he stated the exact date of my birth, he would have incurred a penalty. As a result my birthday can be celebrated on three days: September 20 as stated in my birth certificate, my actual date of birth on September 19, and my passport with the date of September 22. Amusing as well as confusing, to be sure!

Our ancestors hailed from the vicinity of Krumau (Czech: Krumlov) in the Bohemian Forest. In 1838 the colonists traveled on foot to Bukovina behind a lead wagon carrying their essential baggage. Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I (reigned 1835-1849), following the policies of his predecessors, promised them a new homeland in his easternmost territory where each family got a plot of forested land, which they first had to clear. One has to recall that at that time everything had to be done by hand: there were no motorized tractors or chainsaws, making the work very difficult.

At first they constructed wooden houses, later replaced by brick houses. In addition they built stables, barns and sheds for their cattle and poultry. In time a small village, which they called Buchenhain, arose in the depths of the forest.

Of great importance to the villagers was their German-Bohemian dialect. In the midst of a foreign population and culture, there were Bukovina villages in which only German was spoken, German traditions assiduously followed, and German cuisine placed upon the tables. Genuine Bohemian dishes included *Dotschn*, (baked grated potatoes), *Haluschke* (stuffed cabbage) and *Knödel* (dumplings) in all their variations.

My family had cows, calves, hogs, sheep, geese, ducks, chickens and a dog. As you can see, we were reasonably well off and had everything we needed. In the meantime our village had expanded to a length of about seven kilometers. The street ran through the middle of the village with a stream flowing nearby. The terrain consisted of hills and valleys with pastureland high in the mountains, where my family had a barn. It was here that my parents could store the hay and shelter the cattle. The forest, where we always gathered berries, lay in close proximity. And what an assortment of berries: strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and bilberries. Additionally, we also found mushrooms, some eatable, others not. Such a scene defies today's imagination.

The pasturelands high in the mountains were unbelievably enchanting. From there one could see the entire village and even beyond. It was here that one could experience the transformations in land, village and nature. But best of all were the holidays when the boys and girls went there for fun and relaxation. Their singing and yodeling offered a sort of open-air concert, which could be heard for kilometers.

The village grew and in time had a church, cemetery, school, community center, and, strange as it may seem, a store. There was enough work for all. In our village all manner of trades and crafts

would be learned. One could become a tailor, shoemaker, mason, carpenter, wheelwright, smith, photographer, miller, barber and cabinetmaker.

When I close my eyes and my imagination takes me through the village, it seems as though it were yesterday. I can tell you who lived in which house as well as the names and occupations of the occupants. I seem to recall it all. But when I try to reflect on what occurred a few years ago, I have only vague recollections.

We were all happy and satisfied. We had all the heart could desire: friends, family, acquaintances. We celebrated the holidays and were contented. I hasten to add that somehow I miss this inner peace, the simplicity and the togetherness afforded to me in my native village.

But change was in the air. What befell us in the next ten years (1940-1950) is almost incomprehensible. Would we have to relive the experiences of the ancestors, who had also had to abandon their homeland?

Emigration, Resettlement, Flight. Our forebears had been in Bukovina since the early 19th century, always speaking their native German-Bohemian dialect. After the First World War and the cession of Bukovina to Romania, the state made a serious attempt to linguistically and culturally assimilate. Romanian students came to our village to teach us their language, their dances and their music. These attempts, however, bore no fruit. Our pride simply did not permit us to be assimilated. This, perhaps, was the underlying reason why we decided to abandon hearth and home when the opportunity to do so arose in 1940.

An agreement signed on October 22, 1940 between Germany and Romania provided for the evacuation to the *Reich* at the beginning of World War II. of the ethnic Germans of southern Bukovina and the Dobruja (The Germans of northern Bukovina and Bessarabia had been evacuated earlier, after the Soviet annexation of these territories in late June 1940.) For the villagers of Poiana Micului the eventful date for their exodus fell on November 29, 1940. My father had built wooden coffers in which we packed our moveable property. After loading all the baggage onto our horse-drawn wagon we departed for Gurahumora, twenty kilometers from our village. Here we boarded a train, which after four days and four nights took us to our first relocation center.

Anxieties had arisen among our fellow travelers as to what would await us in Germany and where we would be resettled. We children were excited at being able to travel somewhere, anywhere. But the older villagers were very concerned, some even crying. They could not envision the future. Some 7000 Germans had remained in Bukovina. No one could anticipate what would lie ahead.

First stop: Leoben in Styria (Steiermark). Here the sick passengers were removed from the train, including my sister Maria, who was very ill. My mother went with her, since she was still so young. The remaining fellow travelers continued on to a resettlement camp in Mautern, also in Styria, where we remained for nine months. After a three-month hospital stay, my mother and sister were able to rejoin us. Needless to say, we were delighted to see them again.

In the camp we were assigned a large room, dining hall and a kitchen, which we shared with three other families. Here I also attended school. Since I was doing well academically, I skipped the first grade and was immediately promoted to the second.

Our sojourn in Mautern, however, did not last long. Soon we were again packing and boarding a train, this time off to Ratibor in Lower Silesia where we spent the first two days in another resettlement camp. From here we traveled on to Upper Silesia and a camp called Tshediz in the vicinity of Bielitz and then to the transition camp of Zator. New people were arriving on a daily basis and were being resettled in this area.

The concentration camp of Auschwitz was located six kilometers from us. Little did we realize how close to death's door we were. One wrong word and you could kiss life goodbye. My Uncle Johann Hoffman, husband of my Aunt Dilla, personally had to experience this. His complaints about the Nazis had been overheard by informers, who then reported him to government authorities. Uncle Johann was summarily arrested, only to return six weeks later, totally emaciated, bruised and battered. This was a lesson for us all: henceforth no one dared to utter one single complaint about the Nazis.

After a few days we were resettled in Grojez, in the Krena district in Upper Silesia (Oberschlesien). The family who had previously lived there had already been evacuated, perhaps to labor in the German war industry, perhaps for internment in Auschwitz. In Grojez we were assigned a farm, which we tended. We had a plethora of animals including cows, calves, sheep, hogs, geese, ducks, chickens, rabbits, two dogs and even a bull. Since the dogs were very vicious, we kept them chained. They provided protection for us, since at that time many marauders were about. We had to take special heed of the marauders from Cracow (Kraków).

In Grojez I resumed my school studies in a lovely school building with a German-speaking teacher from Berlin, who was here with wife and child. It was also here that my brother Adolf Binder was born on August 8, 1943.

We were assigned two farmhands, Josef and Janek, and a maid, Genoveva, all of whom were ambitious and polite. Our relations with the Poles remained formal but friendly. On one occasion, when my mother was ill, Josef baked a *Dotschn*, which all enjoyed.

I became a member of the League of German Girls (*Bund deutscher Mädel*), the feminine branch of the German youth movement, organized on parallel lines with the Hitler Youth. And after a rather uneventful three years my oldest brother Johann, only seventeen years old, was drafted into the army. But by 1944, when we had begun to hear bombing and machine gun fire, we realized that Germany's war effort was in a state of imminent collapse. With the Soviets rapidly advancing toward Silesia we had no alternative but to flee.

My father packed us off in a transport train on January 14, 1945, and we departed Grojez without him. As the train passed the area in the vicinity of Auschwitz, we witnessed the devastation the bombings had wrought in addition to experiencing actual bombing raids ourselves. On one occasion we had to evacuate the train and take refuge in the air raid shelter of the railroad station. The

bombings and explosions caused the very earth to tremble! The electrical power was out and all lay in darkness as fear gripped the civilian population. My entire body trembled.

Eventually we heard the all clear signal and ventured out of our hiding places. Miraculously we found the train basically intact, with just a few slightly damaged coaches. The train resumed its journey to Freiberg (Czechoslovakia), where for three weeks we were housed in the upper story of a large school and slept on straw mattresses. The foul-smelling odor of these mattresses was overwhelming. Some refugees became ill. My mother truly exerted herself on our behalf, seeing to our proper diet and sanitation.

The time came for us to board another train, where we were pressed together like sardines. Destination: Vienna-Gänsersdorf, but not before living through another air raid. Then on again, in the direction of Upper Austria where we disembarked. Would this be our new homeland? I could hardly assimilate my experiences: the long train ride, the many people in such close quarters, the fear, the horror of the bombing, the wailing of sirens, and the blood of the injured. At that time I was only thirteen years old.

An additional train ride to St. Peter am Hart in Upper Austria still lay before us. We arrived at a farm, greeted by an aroma emanating from the kitchen. Here we were treated to *Rohrmudel* (*Buchtel*, noodles), which to me was a feast; in addition, we could eat as much as we wished. Finally, after all this time, we had a decent meal in peaceful surroundings such as we had not known in weeks. The farmer's wife was friendly and nice, especially to the children.

From the village of St. Peter to continued by train to Ried im Innkreis (Upper Austria), where an oxen-drawn wagon picked us up and drove us to Tumeltsham. This was a farmstead in need of good farm hands and servants.

Then one day my father suddenly appeared at the door. Was this possible? How could it be? Through all the tumult and confusion he had managed to find us. We all embraced him as tears streamed down our cheeks.

My father and sister Rosa had only been able to take the most essential belongings during their flight from Upper Silesia. These few possessions they had loaded onto a cart drawn by two horses and escaped from Grojez. They were part of a long trek, which was underway for weeks on end. While en route and camped about eight kilometers from Dresden they saw the darkness of night turn into the light of day during the Allied firebombing of Dresden on February 13, 1945 in which more than 135,000 Germans perished. History has confirmed that this was the largest number of victims of any single military action of the war.

My father and Rosa had found accommodations at the Ottl farm, in the vicinity of St. Georgen. Naturally, we packed our few belongings and went with them. After months of separation, the family was now finally reunited. With the return of my brother Johann after his internment as a prisoner of war, our family was intact, and we began to fashion a new existence for ourselves in a post-war environment.

BUKOVINA GENEALOGISTS AT THE MEETING OF THE LANDS- MANNSCHAFT DER BUCHENLAND- DEUTSCHEN IN FRANKENTHAL

By Irmtraud Schaper (Bad Lippspringe)

This year's meeting of the *Landsmannschaft der Buchenlanddeutschen* (Association of Bukovina Germans) took place on October 16, 2010 in the house of the Danubian Germans in Frankenthal near Mannheim. In attendance were a goodly number of genealogists, who had chosen the immigrants in Bukovina and their descendants as their area of research. The genealogists who were present and other persons interested in the research of their antecedents met in a separate room for an approximate ninety-minute exchange of ideas under the direction of Professor Kurt Rein. In genealogy Professor Rein envisions an excellent opportunity for the Association to again attract younger people and therefore advocates strengthening its importance within the *Landsmannschaft*. At this time Professor Rein is working on a project in which the various dialectal differences in the former Bukovina German speech patterns will be preserved on CDs and sold at large.

In a stimulating discussion and informational session the genealogists introduced themselves and their research areas. They emphasized that within the *Landsmannschaft* in general there is not enough recognition of genealogy as a field of study. The genealogists who were present were nonetheless convinced that they were carrying out highly valued qualitative work extending far beyond that of a hobby. Consensus was reached that general ownership of the collected data is not an option but that any interested person can approach the researcher to get formation about his ancestry.

At the meeting of the genealogists Alfred Wanza introduced himself. Together with Emilian Fedorowytch he has created an Internet site with Bukovina as its theme, which can be found under www.bukowinafreunde.de. This site contains various general and specific information on the history and culture of Bukovina. The members of the genealogy task force (*Abeitskreises Familienforschung*) agreed with Herr Wanza that a list of Bukovina genealogists with their specialization (places researched and names) should be published under *Familieforschung* (genealogy research). Questions may then be asked via e-mail at buchenland@bukowinafreunde.de or via a guest book yet to be added to the site, which will be directed by an appropriate genealogist. The pros and cons of this type of communication between researcher and interested questioner will be aired at the next meeting of the task force. In addition, those persons who do not work with a computer have the option of a written exchange through the *Landsmannschaft's* newspaper, *Der Südostdeutsche*.

Within the parameters of this year's meeting Adolf and Irmtraud introduced their book, *„das war doch alles ganz normal?“* about the history and personal circumstances of the German Bohemian families in southern Bukovina. It is intended for all who received little or no information from their parents and grandparents and are now beginning to ask questions.

GENEALOGY, A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL JOURNEY

By Steve Parke

Genealogy can take us on many paths of discovery. My own journey has been multi-dimensional moving through various perspectives and expressions. A short sharing of some of these personal avenues might inspire your own journey along new and/or deeper routes. The genealogical journey can go much further than initially imagined.

Initially, collecting a list of linked names is the challenge. Surprises arise for those not aware of the family tree as new surnames appear and one realizes just how many people to whom you are related. Even the numbers can be interesting. For instance I was surprised to find that lumberjack George Klostermann lived to the age of 109 in 1853. And Joseph Aschenbrenner born 1813 had 18 children but only after two marriages and the loss of many young children. It was the best and worst of times.

The Bukovina Society of America introduced me to another aspect of genealogy, the supporting culture and history that carries names and data. Almost immediately, as the Society was formed, both academic and community historians were involved with the Society, setting out the historical context of these migrant Germans in Europe and the Americas. Thus understanding things like how our German-Bohemian ancestors moved from the Bohemian Forest to Bukovina is possible when viewed within the politics and economics of the Austrian Empire. We've been fortunate in the Bukovina Society and related organizations to have people who can enlighten us with both their academic and local sense of history and culture.

In the process of all of the above, I've tended to look for the triumphant story in which we have pride. Why not? Don't we want to see our ancestors in a heroic, victorious light? Surviving multiple migrations, changing political winds and wars, diseases, and diverse economies is quite the accomplishment. Focusing on yesterday's triumphant narrative gives us courage to rise above the challenges and trials of the present day.

But after spending much time with the family and communal history, the tougher times and these pains and losses have become more apparent. This aspect of the story, what might be called the tragic narrative, has always been available but it has personally become easier to see, examine and lift up. From this perspective I've written a song, 'Fallen Souls', as an artistic expression carrying truth in the broader strokes of the story. The song carries a story line within the Nemecek and Reitmeier families transitioning from the Old World to the New World. And while it may not specifically be your family's story, I believe that within an inter-related and communal group such as the Bukovina Germans, every family carries some aspect of the other's story.

Thus here is a story in song form of those fallen souls that came and went before us. This is part of the often buried but always present tragic narrative. Unfortunately you won't be able to hear the song's musical aspects in the text below but know that the melody, rhythm, and harmonizing chords carry the emotions of the once lived story line.

FALLEN SOULS

In the dark Carpathian Forest, Ambrose labored for the kiln man's fire.
Tall trees he toppled to the valley below.
One misty day far from home he felt timber crash,
once a journeyman, now a fallen soul.

His first and only son, Ferdinand married the kiln man's pride.
He cobbled shoes and served in a military role.
From East to West, round they marched. He saw cannon's flash
now framing another fallen soul.

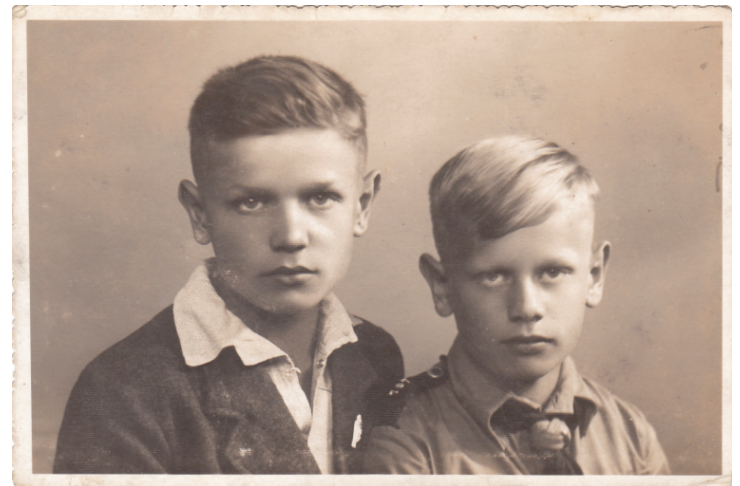
So many fallen souls . . . Hear the fallen souls.
Falling to fly, fly away. . . Let them fly, fly, fly away.

The family fled in time to the new world, following the land man's call.
On steaming ships and hardened rails they rode.
At hearth and home they labored till Philomena fell by fire,
Children cry, another fallen soul.

So many fallen souls . . . Hear the fallen souls.
Falling to fly, fly away. . . Let them fly, fly, fly away.

Now here I stand, a surviving son.
With yesterday's cries ringing my bones.
Haunting my soul and turning over stones
Where I'm standing.
Standing in the shadows to catch my breath.
I've been duckin' and divin', slippin' and slidin'
Still standing . . . Standing round . . .

So many fallen souls . . . Hear the Fallen souls.
Falling to fly, fly away. . . Let them fly, fly, fly away.



Joseph and Leo Wenzel circa 1940

LEO WENZEL HISTORY AND PHOTOS

Steve Wenzel recently "stumbled" onto the Bukovina Society internet site and wished that his Czernowitz born father Leo was still alive to see it. Born June 26, 1929, Leo remembered the beautiful gilt statues of Czernowitz, statues like those in Vienna. His father served in the Austrian Army during the First World War. Today the family lives in Austria and Germany. Leo's mother was a Kurchareck and while they are not certain of the spelling, Steve hopes someone in the Society might recognize or have a connection to the surname.

During the Umsiedlung in 1939 Leo's family was relocated to Poland where he was enrolled into the Jungvolk and apprenticed in a machine shop at the I. G. Farben factory near Auschwitz. At great risk he organized some of his comrades to supply food to the concentration camp prisoners who had been sent to the factory to do janitorial tasks. Everyone received the same meals, generally a thin barley soup, but the prisoners received smaller portions.

The family settled in Austria after the Second World War. Leo was classified as a Displaced Person and later immigrated to America, arriving on Columbus Day 1951. He kept many personal photos and Steve is making digital copies for the Society archives. Below are a few from his collection.



Leo Wenzel, left, was appointed a Deck Policeman on board the ship.



Leo Wenzel, lower left, on the train to Bremen, Germany to board the ship to USA. The young woman next to him is Liesl Gatej from Bukovina.



The Port of New Orleans seen through the ship's rigging from the main deck, October, 1951.