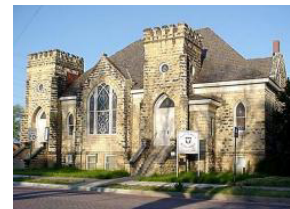




## The Bukovina Society of the Americas

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<a href="#">Home</a>	<a href="#">Up</a>	<a href="#">What's New?</a>	<a href="#">Site Map</a>	<a href="#">About Us</a>	<a href="#">Genealogy &amp; Contacts</a>
<a href="#">Families/Villages</a>	<a href="#">Culture &amp; Customs</a>	<a href="#">Library</a>	<a href="#">Map Room</a>		<a href="#">Store</a>
<a href="#">Search</a>	<a href="#">Other Organizations</a>	<a href="#">Guest Book</a>	<a href="#">About This Website</a>	<a href="#">Auf Deutsch</a>	

	<b>NEWSLETTER</b>	
<a href="#">&lt;Previous Newsletter</a>	Vol. 8, No. 4 - December 1998	<a href="#">Next Newsletter&gt;</a>
	<a href="#">Return to All Newsletters Menu</a>	

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## SOCIETY BUSINESS

Enclosed with the newsletter is a form for annual renewal of your membership. We thank you for your support. Also enclosed is a form for ordering books and memorabilia from the society. These would make good stocking stuffers for Christmas.

## CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

In 1997, the society presented a reenactment of the **Christmas customs of the Bohemian German Catholic and Swabian Lutheran settlers from Bukovina in Kansas**. We welcome information on other groups from Bukovina about their religious or holiday customs. **Sharon Lewchuk** sent an account of the Traditional **Ukrainian Christmas Eve Supper** remembered by her husband Eugene whose family originated in Czernowitz.

Among Ukrainians one beloved festivity is Christmas. Christmas Eve centers around the family. Its main feature is the evening meal called "Holy Supper". According to custom, all members of the family should return home that night for a family reunion. The home is decorated and rearranged days ahead of time. Where national customs are in practice, a sheaf of wheat "Diduch" is as much a part of the decorations as the Christmas tree "Yalyinka" - the Christmas symbol of many nations. The sheaf of wheat is symbolic of the hope that next year's crop will be bountiful. Farming was the chief livelihood of the Ukraine.

The table is set according to custom. First is strewn a small handful of fine hay, in memory of the Christ Child in a manger, and over it is spread the best embroidered tablecloth. Some people place a sheaf under the table, depicting the manger. With the first star in the eastern sky,

members of the family take their places. It is the children's duty to watch for the star. The father leads the grace with the Lord's Prayer, and asks blessing for the health of his family. The candle in the centre of the table is lit, depicting the star that appeared at the birth of Christ.

The meal consists of **12 meatless dishes, symbolic of the 12 Apostles of Christ**. All food is cooked in either butter or oil. The first of the 12 dishes is called "Kutia", whole wheat cooked and prepared with ground poppy seeds, honey, walnuts, and apples. Other dishes [among the 12] are Borsch; Fish; Pyrohy with potato, sauerkraut, poppy seed and prune fillings; Holubsti (cabbage rolls); Pampushky; Mediwnyk and Chrustyky are all served. All members partake of at least a portion of each dish served.

After the solemn meal, the family joins in singing Christmas Carols and in merry-making. Soon after midnight, or at early dawn, the family attends a special Christmas service enhanced with beautiful choral music.

During the three holy days carolers, both young and old, visit homes singing carols, exchanging Yuletide greetings and soliciting funds for worthy causes.

**Lavrentiy Krupnak** recounted in his heritage (Rusnak and Orthodox Christian) they also ate a meatless dinner on the Eve of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. He lists the 12 foods as garlic, honey bread, barley, mushroom or sauerkraut soup, kasha, beans, peas, potatoes, pirohi (potato filling only ... no cheese), prunes or cabbage, and fruit compote. After the Holy supper, the family went to church.

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## HISTORY OF THE BUKOVINA SOCIETY

During 1988, several people were writing to one another about their common interest in Bukovina heritage. **Irmgard Ellingson** wrote a book on the **Lutheran Swabians from Bukovina** who homesteaded north of Ellis, Kansas, founding St. John's Lutheran Church. Her work grew from the period when her she and her husband Wayne ministered there. This put her in touch with **Paul Polansky**, an Iowa native living in Spain. Paul had dedicated considerable private resources to the collection of Bukovina history and assembling a data base of ethnic German immigrants to Bukovina from which he had ancestors. Paul noticed the family history of **Oren Windholz**, on file at the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, contained Bukovina names from his maternal Erbert family. Paul related that Irmgard had invited him to visit Ellis where two major colonies of Bukovina Germans had located beginning in 1886, the 35 Swabian Lutheran and as many Bohemian German Catholic families. At that time only a few people had pursued the history of the migration from Bukovina to the New World also among them **Dr. Sophie Welisch** of Congers, New York.

Polansky had traveled to the former Bukovina, a risky adventure during the Communist era, but he brought out many color slides and information not otherwise available. Just a small notice in local newspapers resulted in a packed house greeting him at St Mary's School auditorium in September of 1988. Everyone in the room was spellbound to learn so much about the country of their ancestors, most having some family oral history but little more. He further thrilled many by calling, up family trees on his laptop computer. The demand was so great for his expertise, he agreed to return the next morning to accommodate the crowd. Paul and his wife, Irmgard and Oren and Pat Windholz met later for coffee to talk about the future. They hatched plans to form a steering committee to conduct a **heritage festival celebrating the immigration to Ellis**. Irmgard received an invitation to the **40th annual meeting of a Bukovina German society in Augsburg** and suggested a delegation attend. These very people did that in May of 1989 after visiting the Polansky Estate in Spain. In Augsburg, the delegation was among some one thousand Bukovina Germans attending, many in awe of seeing cousins after 100 years of separation. Virtually all of the German society members were descendants of the people who remained in Bukovina and were returned to the German Reich during the Umsiedlung of the Second World War. They overwhelmed the delegation with inquiries of their American relatives. Not comprehending the vast expanse of North America they asked, "Do you know of my cousins in Canada?"

Irmgard met with Windholz on the morning of December 10th in 1988 during which they made plans to form the Bukovina Society. Their organizing committee included **Bernie Zerfas, Darrell Seibel, Joe Erbert, and Ernie Honas**. A public meeting was held the next day resulting in an **association named the Bukovina Society of the Americas**. Although the roots were in the ethnic German heritage of Western Kansas, the association was established broadly to include others of Bukovina interest in North and South American locations. A board of directors was elected from the assembly comprising the **organizing committee members, Dr. Sophie Welisch, Paul Polansky and Bob Schonhaler** with vacancies to be filled later. **The first officers were Oren Windholz, President, Darrell Seibel, Vice President, Joe Erbert, Secretary, and Bernie Zerfas, Treasurer.**

In March of 1989 the new association adopted By-laws and finalized plans for the July 19-22 festival, intending it a one time heritage celebration. This program featured **Irma Bornemann** representing the Bukovina Societies in Germany, **Paul Polansky, Dr. Sophie Welisch, Roy Kerth and Lawrence Weigel** who gave presentations at the Ellis High School. The week ended with a grand German dinner and dance at St. Mary's Gymnasium which featured the **25th Anniversary Hochzeit of Reinhold and Margaret Boschowitzki**. After the meeting, the board was expanded to include **Irma Bornemann, Raymond Haneke; and Wilfred Uhren from Oklahoma**. The tremendous success of the heritage festival and the many requests for another led the new board to schedule another celebration for July of 1990, and the society has met each year since. To reflect the broad representation of the society, an international board was created to expand society influence and to assist the local corporate board delegated with the duties of business operations. A delegation of board members and spouses traveled to Regina, Canada at the invitation of the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society to speak about Bukovina heritage. A long list of prominent speakers have assisted the society each year at their own expense to provide quality programs.

Little could the organizers have dreamed on that cold weekend in December of 1988 the Bukovina Society would grow to over 100 life members and 150 annual members in a non profit corporation. Or have our own headquarters and museum thanks to the trustees caring for the former First Congregational Church and the City of Ellis. Or the steady stream of researchers, dignitaries, and Bukovinian descendants who have visited Ellis the past 10 years from Germany, Canada, Brazil, and all directions around America. Or the honor by the University of

Kansas and the University of Munich for recording our history and the other authors and researchers who have published a flow of books and articles. Or the many society members who have returned to Bukovina to visit the homeland and shared it with others. Or the over 100 people from around the world who are in constant and common communication through e-mail promoting Bukovina heritage thanks to Bev Muntain and associates in Canada. Or the home page on the Internet which brings many new people into our ranks thanks to **Larry Jensen**. Or the ever expanding data base of nearly 10,000 names in the society computer thanks to **Werner Zoglauer**. Thanks to the many people not named in this historical account who have contributed so much to the Bukovina Society and to Pat Windholz who traveled this great chapter in my life with me.

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# HISTORY OF THE OBERLÄNDER FAMILY

By: [Renate Gschwendtner](#)

**Renate began researching her heritage 11 years ago. Her grandmother told her stories of life in Bukovina and she visited the homeland at the age of 7 with her grandparents who wished to see it one last time. She is a member of the Bukovina General mailing list. She and her husband Johann have two sons age 6 and 12 and live in Dingolfing, Germany.**

*Translated by: Dr. Sophie A. Welisch*

**Settlement in Bukovina.** Gottlieb Oberländer left his hometown of Göllnitz in the Zips [Szepes, now Slovakia] after the Austrian nobleman **Karl Manz von Mariensee** began searching for trained personnel to process iron ore in South Bukovina. **In 1807 an ironworks was constructed** on the Moldova River near Wama [Vama]. Initially with only thirty-eight German settlers, all from the Zips; the community of Eisenau [Prisaca Dornei] arose one year later.

The homeland of the Zipsers lay in Upper Hungary. In the thirteenth century the **Hungarian King Bela IV invited German settlers** into the country in order to cultivate land desolated and devastated by the Tatar hordes. In 1270 the Zipsers, according to the so-called "Zipser Decree," were guaranteed autonomy and various privileges. Because of the abundance of minerals, a mining industry developed. Knight von Manz certainly looked in the right place for specialists for his new iron foundries.

**Life in Eisenau.** **Gottfried Oberländer** was a foundry worker and would have been among the first Zipsers in Eisenau. In 1812 he married **Elisabeth Christofori** of Gurahumora [Gura Humorului], who came from Hettau in the Zips. These two became the progenitors of a large descendency.

The foundry remained the principal source of work for the villagers until 1870. In addition, they kept cattle and poultry, and planted potatoes, oats, barley, poppies, turnips, cabbage, vegetables, hemp, and flax. When **Emperor Franz 1(1768-1835) toured Bukovina in 1817**, he also visited Eisenau. **In his travelogue he wrote:**

"August 12... Gently up and down, where the Wama basin extends into a narrow valley, [one sees] to the left the new village laid out by Manz with attractive wooden houses built according to regulations and occupied entirely by Zipsers. There is also a large long building, Manz's foundry, with five hammers, furnished very nicely with bellows. Here he makes bars, iron rails, etc. from the iron of Jakobeny. The wheel room is covered with a mill-race. He built the iron works here because the Moldova [River] does not freeze. He sells the iron in Bukovina and Galicia but not so much, according to his statements, that he can do without importing foreign iron. More iron foundries can be built. In a house level to the ground is a one-room school in which some thirty children of both sexes are taught to read and write. .."

The first church in Eisenau was erected in 1821. Most of the villagers were Lutheran, with a Catholic minority of less than 10 percent. Both denominations held religious services in the church. When in 1825 an agreement was drawn up for the common use of the church, **Gottlieb Oberländer** was among the signatories for the Lutheran Christians.

Depleted mineral resources and poor investments on the part of the mining administration led to the decline of the mining industry in Bukovina. In 1870 the entire Manz family enterprise came under the ownership of its largest creditor, the **Greek Orthodox Religious Foundation**. The establishment of this foundation dates back to Emperor Joseph II [1741-1790] and the dissolution of numerous Greek-Orthodox monasteries.

The Eisenau iron works continued to operate after the take-over and added a rolling mill which processed old iron. From it, plow shares, shovels, pickaxes, kettles, and various sorts of sheet and hoop iron as well as iron wire were manufactured. In addition, the old rails of the Lemberg-Czernowitz Jassy [Lvov-Chernovtsy-Isasi] railroad line were also melted down.

After the dissolution of the Manz enterprises in Bukovina, the Oberländer males had to look around for other sources of livelihood. They supported their families as foresters and construction workers, as teamsters, or as quarry workers. Many labored away from home and sometimes returned home after being away for weeks. The single daughters hired out as maids of the well-to-do in places like Wama, Kimpolung [Campulung], Dorna Watra [Vatra Dornei] and Czernowitz.

Fruits and vegetables were grown in the household garden plots and in the fields. They planted flax and used it to make bedding, table cloths and towels. They raised geese for their feathers and meat and chickens for eggs and a Sunday roast. At the Oberländers several cows were usually kept in the stable and they fattened hogs. In the forests they gathered berries and mushrooms.

Life and cuisine had their limitations, often rather meager. **Gisela Oberländer, descendant of Gottlieb**, recalled how many of the older ladies could only prepare simple dishes. Only after working as maids in well-to-do homes did the females gain wider cooking skills.

**Katharina Oberländer oo Angelo Cattaneo.** With the development of railroads at the end of the nineteenth century, many Italian construction workers, brought in because of their skills in stone masonry, married into German families. In 1891 **Katharina Oberländer** married the stone mason **Angelo Cattaneo** from Alzate in the province of Como. With the completion of the railroad line, Angelo Cattaneo worked in forestry. The couple had one son and six daughters.

On October 22, 1900 the Imperial and Royal [k.k. = *kaiserlich u. königlich*] notary **Simeon Baranowski** in Kimpulung issued the following bill of sale: **Katharina Katani** (the Italian name had been Germanized) acquired property in Eisenau from **Michael and Sofie Löffler**. At the time of the documentation the Katanis had already built a house. The purchasing price of 160 crowns had been paid several months earlier. In April 1911 Angelo Katani (Cattaneo) applied for Austrian citizenship.

**World War I.** The First World War presented Eisenau with intermittent quartering of Russian and Austrian troops. The villagers learned of the outbreak of the war through a town crier with a drum. Shortly thereafter the Katanis' only son, **Ambros**, was inducted. He returned home with a bullet in his lung, which could not be removed. For a long time he suffered from his injuries, yet he survived and later again worked as a stone mason. When he died in 1962 he bullet was still in his lung.

The father of the family was exempted from military service because he was employed as a bridge guard on the Bokotara railroad bridge, which lay between Alt Kimpolung and Eisenau. Due to fear of attacks, the bridge was guarded around the clock.

**Early in 1916 Russian troops marched through Eisenau** to the front. Previously the Eisenauers had heard atrocity stories about the murder of small children. Since the Katani house lay on the main street, the children were brought to Samowilla, a friend of Angelo Katani, likewise from Italy. For fourteen days the mother carried food to them. When it became obvious that the Russians did not harm the children, she brought them back home. In time the children felt so secure that they ran after the military bands, which accompanied the Russian troops to the front, in order to hear the music.

In the direction of Hurgisch, near the so-called trenches, the Katanis owned parcels of land and a hay stand. As a Romanian at the direction of the Russians was taking hay from there, Angelo Katani became enraged and struck him a blow. Two Russian soldiers began looking for Katani who, when he saw them coming, ran out the back door, through the garden, and jumped over the fence. The soldiers saw his tracks and assumed Katani had fled up the mountain. Luckily they did not go up to the fence, since he was cowering in back of it in the snow. When they departed, he hid for fourteen days at the home of his friend, Samowilla, where his wife brought him food every day.

The women often had to hide out for days at a time. They crawled into cellars, whose trap doors were covered with rugs and all sorts of items or ran behind the houses to the mountain and hid in the bushes which grew all over the meadows.

One daughter of the Katanis, **Amalie**, barely escaped being raped. She was underway with her younger sister, Gisela, when she was attacked by two Russians. They pulled her to the ground. But since the younger sister steadfastly remained at her side, they had moral afterthoughts and let Amalie go.

As the Russian troops were forced to retreat by the Austrians, they blew up Eisenau's two bridges. Those living near the Sawoi Bridge were warned and opened their windows, although the explosion of the railroad bridge shattered many window panes. The retreating Russians shot up the place and, while most of the bullets landed on the mountain slopes above the houses, some buildings were nonetheless also hit. Since the owners immediately put out the fires, total destruction was avoided. Only one stable burned entirely to the ground. One lady from Kälbergasse, who was standing in the courtyard with her baby in her arms, was killed by a grenade. With the exception of a few scratches, the baby was uninjured.

The frightened villagers drove their cattle ahead of them and departed Eisenau in the direction of the approaching Austrian troops. The Katanis took their three cows and likewise joined the entourage. They had hidden one cow in a cellar.

At the Bokotara Bridge the Russians had thrown away a lot of bread. The people of Eisenau began gathering these military supplies when two Austrian cavalry men approached. They warned the people that the Russians could observe them with their binoculars and advised them to hide with their cattle in the forest. Several women got the idea of making a fire which was noticed by the enemy troops, causing them to fire a round of shots.

**Angelo Katani** had enough of the people's nonsense and drove his cows to Tomnatic Mountain, where there was a hut. This is where in normal times the Katanis' young cattle would be pastured for the summer. Angelo stayed there for several weeks and his wife brought food to him daily.

As the Austrians marched into the village, the Katanis had to empty a room where the soldiers established an officers' kitchen. The cook, Emil Gall of Vienna, was a friendly young man, who fell in love with Amalie Katani and often gave the daughters something special. The officers ate to gramophone music and sometimes organized dance evenings.

These rather pleasant quartered guests were followed by Hungarian Imperial and Royal troop detachments, which again set up their kitchen in the Katani house. The new cook was not so generous, and Gisela Katani was rude to him. With time he became so annoyed that he threw a handful of sharp paprika in her eyes. Gisela endured terrible pain and for a while could not see. Her father threw the cook out of the house and complained to the officers. After that, the kitchen was relocated to another house.

At night the soldiers stole potatoes from the fields and the young people of the village had to keep watch.

Summer school instruction repeatedly failed to take place for longer periods of time. **Gisela Katani** attended school for about four years, until her mother took her out of school before her allotted time and sent her to work as a maid.

**Interwar Period.** After the war Bukovina was incorporated into Romania. Henceforth, education was to be conducted only in the Romanian language. Gisela Oberländer recalls her only hour of instruction in Romanian. The new teacher wanted her to write "hen" and "rooster" on the blackboard in Romanian. She could not do it, nor could anyone in the class. Unnerved, the teacher gave up and accommodated himself to the pupils who were just beginning in school. From about 1923-24 classes in Eisenau were conducted only in Romanian.

In 1925 **Angelo Cattaneo** died at the age of sixty-two. His widow wanted to leave the house to her daughter Auguste and her son-in-law Franz Presser. When this daughter died young and without offspring, the youngest daughter, Gisela got the house and also undertook the care of her old mother. The other children either got money or parcels of land. Gisela and her husband Rudolf Oberländer had previously owned another house, which they turned over as compensation to their brother-in-law Presser.

**In 1929 Gisela Katani married Rudolf Oberländer**, her cousin in second degree of kinship. He worked as a mason and had fulfilled his military obligation in the Romanian army. Workers were needed for tunnel construction in Ilva. After Rudolf Oberländer started working there, he could return to his family only every five or six weeks.

**In 1930 their daughter Edith was born.** Because only Romanian was taught in the schools, a "school committee" was established in Eisenau, which got clearance by the Ministry of Culture to offer a German course. Between 1936-38 the teacher Kastenhuber from Grossau in Transylvania conducted German lessons in the parish house. Later teacher Frambach took over the German lessons. During her school years Edith always attended the classes in the parish house.

**World War II: Resettlement.** When the Second World War broke out, the Oberländers hoped that Bukovina would be spared. They could not realize that the loss of their homeland lay ahead of them. In October 1948 Germany and Romania reached an accord about the resettlement of the Germans from South Bukovina.

When the resettlement commission was activated, Gisela and Rudolf Oberländer hesitated. They did not want to abandon their homeland and their homestead. But as more and more villagers opted for resettlement and the threat of war intensified, the Oberländers feared being left behind and consented with heavy heart.

Baron von der Goltz, assessor in Kimpolung, judged the social situation in Eisenau to be catastrophic and noted "that the desire for resettlement among the Eisenauers was unusually strong; they saw the return to the Reich as a solution to their dire straits at the last hour and therefore could hardly wait to be transported to the Reich."

Perhaps this characterization fit individual families. However, it was not true of the Oberländers. Although they lived in modest circumstances, they would have gladly continued a peaceful life in Eisenau.

Two transports were set aside for the village of Eisenau. "The village was dismal after half of the people had departed," Gisela Oberländer related. "The empty houses and wailing dogs had a depressing effect."

The few possessions which could be taken, were packed in a large wooden crate and transported in special train cars. These freight cars remained at an Austrian railroad station for weeks and the contents rotted. The family could only take portable luggage which, according to regulations, was to contain food for three days. Gisela Oberländer had killed and roasted her chickens.

The people boarded the train in Eisenau and after short stopovers in Budapest, Bruck an der Leitha and Vienna, arrived in Bavaria. Here the Eisenau villagers found shelter in three monasteries: St. Magdalena in Altötting, St. Ottilien, and Algasing near Dorfen.

**Camp Residence in the Monastery Algasing in Bavaria.** The Oberländers were sent to Algasing. At the train station of the next largest town, in Dorfen, the transferees were greeted by National Socialist party dignitaries. Then the train proceeded, taking the Eisenauers to the monastery, where a reception awaited them. The next day Gisela Oberländer noticed that an arch of flowers had been set up but damaged by the locals who were not so enthusiastic about the arrival of the strangers. The newcomers were led across the fields to the monastery to avoid passing the partially destroyed arch.

Men and women were assigned to separate sleeping quarters, each holding about sixty persons. The men were only present on weekends, since they had to work in a munitions factory in Kraiburg, about forty miles away. The camp administrator withheld the men's wages. Gisela Oberländer did not want to put up with that and a misunderstanding arose. Camp life was difficult and the Oberländers had to spend one year in Algasing: from November 1940 to September 1941.

The Immigrant Central Authority [*Einwandererzentralstelle* (EWZ)] established so-called "flying commissions," which processed the transferees in the resettlement camps. The Bukovina Germans were classified into one of four categories based on racial criteria, identified with Roman numerals, and into one of five categories according to political criteria, identified with Arabic numerals. Those with Roman numerals I, II, and III were the "0-cases" [*Osten* - East]. They were to be settled in the East. Anyone assigned the number IV was an "A case," [*Alt Reich* - Old Reich] and not considered worthy to manage a farmstead in the East.

The Oberländers were destined for the "Old Reich," although they wanted to settle in Silesia along with the other people from Eisenau. They were thus presumably in value level N. Gisela Oberländer surmised that her dispute with the camp administrator and perhaps her half-Italian origin led to this decision. Since her sisters, who also had the same Italian father, and also the siblings of Rudolf Oberländer were classified as 0's, the influence of the camp administrator no doubt played a role.

Camp Life in Resettlement Camp 2 in Liebenburg/Harz near Salzgitter. In September 1941 the family received its naturalization papers and after a short stay in a transit camp, relocated to Resettlement Camp 2 in Liebenburg/Harz. Now instead of living with sixty people, they only had fifteen in one room. Since the war was dragging out, food for the population became scarce and the Oberländers often went hungry. Rudolf Oberländer had to work in the Hermann-Göring Works in Watenstedt. Again, he saw his family only on weekends.

At school **Edith Oberländer** became infected with typhus. Her mother also got ill. The camp was put under quarantine and the Oberländers, who were the only camp occupants to get typhus, were hospitalized in Hildesheim. A minor epidemic had broken out among the Liebenburg population. Some people died, but Edith and Gisela Oberländer survived. When they returned to the camp after several weeks, the camp administrator did not want to shelter the "typhus pigs," as he called them. He despised them, since because of them he had to put up with the quarantine and all sorts of complications with the authorities. With the help of these authorities, Gisela Oberländer won out and the family could remain in the camp. In any event the administrator denied them provisions, and they had to cook over a candle for themselves.

Via correspondence with her relatives, who had been resettled in Upper Silesia, the Oberländers heard that one did not suffer any hunger there. Gisela applied to the Immigrant Central Authority for resettlement in Silesia. Since her request initially remained unfulfilled, she, along with three other camp residents, traveled to Berlin to present her case personally. Finally she was successful and toward the end of 1942 the Oberländers could depart for Silesia.

**Domicile in Silesia and Flight.** The Oberländers were assigned a small farmstead in Wolfsdorf near Bielitz. The Polish owners had to evacuate the premises. When Gisela Oberländer saw by what injustice the family had acquired the farmstead, it became clear to her that they could find no permanent residence there. "But at least for once we will not have to hunger," she observed. "I ate myself big and fat, since I suspected we would soon have to move on."

The German population lived in perpetual fear of the Polish partisans, who wanted to avenge the injustice which the Polish house and property owners had sustained. This caused Rudolf Oberländer to have apprehension about what would happen to his wife and daughter if he were inducted and they remained behind unprotected. He mentioned his concerns to a Polish acquaintance, who daily came to them for milk. The man replied that Rudolf should not worry about it. Later, the Oberländers suspected that he probably had connections with the resistance groups.

Rudolf Oberländer was inducted into the military and in December 1944 his wife was notified that he was missing in action. She received the few private articles from the baggage of her husband.

As the Germans out of fear decided to flee from the advancing Russians, Gisela and Edith Oberländer packed their few belongings onto a horse-drawn cart of brother-in-law Anton Hennel. Together with him and his wife Amalie they made their way. The trek went through Czechoslovakia to Austria.

Due to continued differences of opinion, Gisela Oberländer separated from her sister and her husband in Znaim [Moravia]. For many months mother and daughter lived there before they again took flight because of the many air raids and fear of the advancing Russians.

While pausing for rest on the estate of a nobleman in Drosendorf in Austria, the Russian troops caught up with them. They continued their flight on foot. Together with numerous other refugees, they overnights in a barn, from which the Russians seized and raped women and girls. When the Russians were looking for victims, they concealed themselves and snuck away. They were very lucky not to have been violated.

Gisela and Edith Oberländer wanted to go to Bavaria, to the American occupation zone, where they had spent a year in the monastery of Algasing. They had relatives living near there, in Taufkirchen on the Vils [River], from whom they hoped to get help.

Traveling by train for a short distance, they arrived in the border city of Passau [Bavaria]. From there they had to continue by foot. Sometimes American soldiers took them by truck. On July 17, 1945 they reached Taufkirchen. Their entire worldly possessions consisted of two suitcases and one rucksack with a few personal articles.

**Post-War Period in Bavaria.** Taufkirchen was saturated with refugees. The authorities forced the local population to quarter the newcomers. Edith and Gisela Oberländer first lived with their relatives, then in a pantry and later in an apartment where, together with other refugees, they shared a common kitchen. Finally they got two small rooms in a one-family house. Gisela looked for work with a farmer in the neighborhood. Edith was sent to a seamstress in order to learn to sew. Later she worked in a weaving mill.

Rudolf Oberländer, who had been declared missing in action, survived the war and landed in American captivity. On November 1, 1944 he became POW No. 31-965079 and on October 5, 1945, was tried by a Captain F. A. Arnold A. Hansen and fined 440 Reichsmarks. In Le Havre, France, he was put aboard a ship bound for a POW camp in the USA. The ship left port but then turned back. In 1946 Rudolf Oberländer was a free man.

He also thought of the relatives in Bavaria. From them he hoped to hear something about the fate of his family. One can only imagine his happiness when he met his wife and daughter there.

Now the three lived in the small rooms. The famine winter of 1946-47, which cost the lives of so many people, stood before them. In contrast to some others, the family survived rather well in those hard times. Gisela Oberländer requested to be paid in kind for her work on the farm and had laid up provisions.

The post-war period was difficult, but the people from Bukovina were ambitious and worked hard. Most of them again acquired property and many Eisenauers built houses in Taufkirchen and in the neighboring town of Dorfen.

In 1950 Edith Oberländer married, and together with her husband and her parents, built a house in Dorfen.

The Oberländers felt comfortable in Bavaria. They worked diligently and achieved a modest standard of living. Rudolf Oberländer, who again found work as a mason, had to retire early because of poor health. He was only able to enjoy retirement for a few years; then he became seriously ill and died at the age of sixty-four. Gisela Oberländer is ninety-one years old and lives contentedly in the circle of her family. She takes special pleasure in both her great-grandchildren.

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## THE STAUDERNHEIM GELB FAMILY

Translated by Sophie A. Welisch from

**Johann Christian Dressler, "Das Geschlecht der Staudernheimer Geib," in Bukowina: Heimat von Gestern, Erwin Massier, Josef Talsky and B. C. Grigorowicz, eds. (Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag "Arbeitskreis Bukowina Heimatbuch,"**

The descendants of the Geibs, who in 1784-85 immigrated from Staudernheim in Hesse to Landstreu and Ugarsthal in East Galicia and then to Bukovina, were productive people in all areas of human works and deeds. The activity of many of them was often of such significance to their immediate and even wider surroundings, that streets were named after them, e.g., Geib Street in Czernowitz and in Stanislau (Galicia). They were for the most part dyed-in-the-wool farmers and for that alone a blessing for their urban communities.

Johann Georg Geib, born on 23 May 1799 in Landstreu and documented as "smith and bell caster in Landstreu," is the first bell caster to be identified from the family of the Staudernheim Geibs. He was followed in this vocation by his son Philipp Andreas Geib, born on 13 March 1832, who can actually be viewed as the founder of the "Geib bell caster dynasty." He learned the trades of bell caster and blacksmith from his father, became a master craftsman, and in 1868 moved with his family to Czernowitz, where he was not unknown, since he had already shipped five bells to Bukovina. He constructed his workshop in the extended Transylvania Street (Siebenbürgerstrasse) under house number 85, to which in 1872 a large foundry shed was added.

This Geib, who was an excellent farmer on the side, and who also produced various superb agricultural tools and machines, was especially ambitious and worked to the end of his life. In the course of a half century he cast over 650 bells, of which the largest of 2,600 kg. with a diameter of 1.60 m. was for the Greek Orthodox cathedral in Czernowitz, in addition to a 1000 kg. bell for the monastery in Putna. But his best work, for which he was repeatedly honored, even with the gold medal, was the royal bell cast for Mahala in 1886, which in World War I was confiscated by the Austrians for war purposes.

Of the five sons of the "founder of the Geib bell dynasty," only two remained loyal to the trade of their father, *which* they plied in addition to their principal occupation: Alfred Geib, farrier and wheelwright, and Gustav Geib, "teacher and bell caster," as they referred to themselves. Aside from his trade, the former, Alfred Geib, born on 15 August 1853, was a capable farmer. With his son he opened his own bell foundry in 1908, which continued in operation until 1914.

Arnold Geib, born on 3 March 1879, was until 1893 an apprentice under his grandfather and during this time also graduated from the state trade school in Czernowitz. For one year beginning in 1901 he was the town counselor in his home town. Between 1903 until 1914 he worked together with his father as actual director of the foundry. After World War I, in which he served on the Russian front and thereafter on the Italian front, he consolidated his foundry with that of his uncle, Gustav Geib, whose collaborator he remained for a time after the death of his father until toward the end of 1923, when he liquidated his partnership and once again worked for himself. His enterprise flourished as never before. As a result of events related from the war, the demand for bells was very great and the contracts which Arnold Geib had to fulfill grew from day to day. The increasing competition from and advertisement by various firms in Old Romania (Romania in its pre-1914 boundaries) could not affect him since "Geib bells" were preferred to all others because of their excellent quality.

During his period of activity in Bukovina Arnold Geib cast over 1,250 bells, i.e., the most of all the Geib bell casters. His special masterpieces were the royal jubilee bell cast for Mamajestie in 1908, the large bell weighing 1,500 kg. for the Nicholas Church in Czernowitz, and the big bell for the Greek-Oriental Church in Illischestie. Among these bells is also the one cast in 1924 for the Lutheran church in Badeutz, which, during the transfer of the Germans from Bukovina (1940), was brought to the Palatine and today peels in

Friedelsheim. For his exemplary achievements Arnold Geib was awarded the gold medal at the 1925 exhibition in Kishinev (Ukraine). His younger brother, Edmund Geib, born on 22 June 1899, was his successor.

After the death of the immigrant Philipp Andreas Geib, the "First Czernowitz Geib Bell Foundry," including the farmstead, went to this second son, Gustav Geib. He has already been identified as "teacher and bell caster." As a graduate of the Imperial and Royal Provincial Teachers' Training Institute in Czernowitz, he was, after a brief period in the Lutheran school in Czernowitz and until his retirement, teacher and headmaster of the State Boys' School on Transylvania Street From 1903 until his death in 1934 Gustav Geib cast over 1,100 bells. His outstanding work was the jubilee bell cast in 1906 for the exhibition in Bucharest, for which he was awarded the gold medal. This bell, designated as "a unique work of art of its type anywhere in the world," showed on its mantel busts of Emperor Francis Joseph I, Emperor William II, the Russian Tsar Nicholas II, and the Romanian King Carol I. This bell then went to the community of Molodia.

Gustav Geib was a bell caster for fifty-six years and a teacher for forty-eight. Despite both these professions, he always found time meaningfully to participate in all the German clubs and establishments of his hometown as well as in his church community. "However, he was not one to say 'no' to a good drink and also spent many a happy hour in the circle of his many friends!"

His artistic workmanship was continued by his son, Gustav Geib, born on 11 June 1902. The latter became an apprentice in his father's shop in 1918, later added to his knowledge through studies in Germany, and thus, in addition to his position as town councilor, became a worthy successor of his father and grandfather.

Until the resettlement of the Bukovina Germans to Germany in 1940, Gustav Geib produced bells which all together weighed 28,900 kg. His son, Gustav Geib, more accurately Gustav Friedrich Geib, emigrated to Adelaide, Australia in June 1949 with his wife and his son Lothar. Do "Geib bells" peel there as well?

Be that as it may, the descendants of the Staudernheim Geibs have vanished from their homelands in eastern and southeastern Europe, but their works from the Palatinate and its broader surroundings to beyond the Carpathians give testimony to their multifaceted skills and the great sacrifice in time and effort which they expended for others. They were productive people whom one must acknowledge with respect and appreciation.


Edward R. Brandt, Ph.D., Accredited Genealogist, a presenter at our 1996 Bukovinafest, has a web site to continue his work in providing genealogy information.

<<http://home.cwix.com/-brandt@mci2000.com/edward.htm>> Ed sent the society a book review he wrote. Wilmer a. Harms, M.D., *The Odyssey of Escapes from Russia: The Saga of Anna K.* (Hillsboro, KS: Hearth Publishing, 1998), 203 pp. Paperback. The book lists the names and personal data on 1,175 Soviet Germans who fled into China beginning in 1928 after the Soviets slammed the door on the already limited emigration. The dramatic stories of the flight feature Anna K, the author's teacher sixty years ago. It is a must for those with Black Sea Mennonite or Volhynian Lutheran ancestors, but will appeal to others with Russian German interest Ed has 10 books he has written or otherwise been a part of available at special prices and can be reached at 13 - 27th Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414-3101 <[brandt@mci2000.com](mailto:brandt@mci2000.com)>

The Society for German American Studies is making a special offer for past issues of the YEARBOOK, or even a complete set as long as quantities last. Contact Frances Ott Allen at <[allenfo@email.uc.edu](mailto:allenfo@email.uc.edu)> or William Keel Department of Germanic Languages, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2127 <[wkeel@falcon.cc.ukans.edu](mailto:wkeel@falcon.cc.ukans.edu)> The SGAS 23rd Annual Symposium is scheduled for April 22-25, 1999 in New Ulm, MN and the 24th Annual Symposium will be held in Bremerhaven/Bremen beginning June 11 in the millennium year 2000. A call for papers is being made for both with contact person La Vern J. Rippley <[rippleyl@stolaf.edu](mailto:rippleyl@stolaf.edu)>

[Top of Page](#)

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