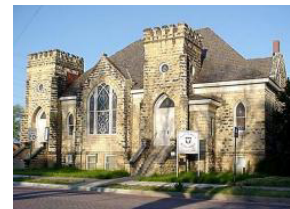




The Bukovina Society of the Americas

P.O. Box 1083, Hays, KS 67601, USA
Oren Windholz, President windholz@bukovinasociety.org



Visit our Store for Bukovina

Membership Information

Home	Up	What's New?	Site Map	About Us	Genealogy & Contacts
Families/Villages	Culture & Customs	Library	Map Room		Store
Search	Other Organizations	Guest Book	About This Website	Auf Deutsch	

	NEWSLETTER	
<Previous Newsletter	Vol. 10, No. 3 - September 2000	Next Newsletter>
	Return to All Newsletters Menu	

Board of Directors:

[Oren Windholz](#), President
Mary Agnes Wagner, Vice President
Joe Erbert, Secretary
Bernie Zerfas, Treasurer
Frank Augustine
Ralph Burns
Raymond Haneke
Ralph Honas
Shirley Kroeger
Dennis Massier
Ray Schoenthaler
Darrell Seibel

International Board:

[Irmgard Hein Ellingson](#)
Aura Lee Furgason
[Rebecca Hageman](#)
[Larry Jensen](#)
Dr. Ortfried Kotzian
Edward Al Lang
Paul Massier
Van Massier
[Steve Parke](#)
Prof. Dr. Kurt Rein
[Wilfred Uhren](#)
[Dr. Sophie Welisch](#)
[Werner Zoglauer](#)

P.O. Box 81, Ellis, KS 67637 USA

Editorial response to
P. O. Box 1083
Hays, KS 67601-1083

E-mail: windholz@bukovinasociety.org

BUKOVINAFEST 2000

The convention was a great success and we thank all the presenters and volunteers who made it possible. Thanks also to people who made donations to the society of books, documents and data. **Erich and Inge Slawski, Michael Augustin, Werner Zoglauer, Dr. Sophie Welisch, and Kathy Windholz Wolf.** A special thanks to **Regina (Schott) Schiessl**, daughter of **Theresia Augustin**, who donated to the society museum her baptismal dress brought from Bukovina.

The board of directors has made a commitment to conduct the next Bukovinafest in Regina, Canada in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Federation of East European Family History Societies. The dates will be on or near July 18th, 2002. **Irmgard Hein Ellingson** is chair of the program and numerous members of the Bukovina Society will participate in the planning. Announcements will be made in future issues of the Newsletter on programs and activities.

BRAZIL 2001

[Ayrton Gonçalves Celestino](#) extends an invitation to members of the Bukovina Society to attend the Bukovina celebrations in Rio Negro/Mafra in July of 2001. At the Bukovinafest in Ellis, several members of the society expressed an interest in creating a tour. Anyone wishing to join a tour to Brazil may contact the society for more information.

Al Lang gave a report at Bukovinafest on his visit to Brazil in May of this year. "I had the opportunity to visit Professor Ayrton Gonçalves Celestino while in Brazil. **Professor Celestino** is extremely active with the Bukovina Germans in Brazil. His mother was born **Schelbauer** and his maternal grandfather was **Ignatz Schödlbauer**, who emigrated from Bukovina to Brazil on 7 July 1887.

First some general observations on my trip to Brazil. Brazil edges ever closer to the turning point when it will become an economic powerhouse. It has a population of more than 150 million people, more than the rest of South America combined, and its economy holds the same status. Brazil is rich in natural resources and labor. In 1999, Brazil celebrated its 500th anniversary of its founding by the Portuguese. Portuguese is the official language of Brazil today, while the rest of South America speaks Spanish.

I fell in love with Brazil. The dynamics of its economy are well evidenced in the fashionable shops and malls offering goods made worldwide to the street peddlers, that still move their wares by a cart pulled by themselves. Brazil accommodates both and understands each as acceptable in order to provide a living.

On a beautiful Saturday morning in May, I left the airport in Sao Paulo, a city of 18 million people and flew south about one hour to a city of 1 million people, Curitiba.

Curitiba is said to be the most European city in Brazil. Indeed, it reminded me very much of the cities of Germany, with the whitewashed home exteriors, the tiled roofs, and the iron fenced yards. Professor Celestino met me at the airport and invited me to his home where I met his lovely wife, **Alyrde Canesin Celestino**, of Italian descent. (The Brazilians use double last names). His two children, **Fernando and Rosilena** were not available to meet that day.

Professor Celestino then drove me to meet a close friend of his, **Carlos Walter Kolb and his wife Suzane**. Mr. Kolb is an engineer and a mathematics professor at the Federal University of Parana, the State in which Curitiba lies. Mr. Kolb knew some English and understood a certain amount of German, the written German, not dialect. His father, **Kunibert**, was born in Bori, Gura Humora, Bukovina. Carlos's mother was born **Elvira Weber** and is a descendant of the **Welisch** family. Mrs. Weber was at the house when I arrived and after she was told that I could speak German, we began a nice conversation. I noticed that everyone that I met, who could speak German, spoke the written German. I was told German was taught in the schools until World War II. The Germans in Brazil were under the same scrutiny during the war as were the Germans in the United States.

Mr. Kolb gave me a tour of his home. It reminded me of the homes in Germany, with one exception. It seems that newer homes in Brazil have a barbecue pit as an addition to the house proper. The Brazilians are well known for their consumption of beef and make an art of its preparation. After a short visit, Mr. Kolb, escorted Professor Celestino and me to a local Churrascuria.

A Churrascuria con rudisio(sp?) is an attraction in Brazil, that no tourist should every bypass. It is a steakhouse with waiters that rotate throughout the restaurant with various types of meat. Each table is provided a toggle with one end green and the other end red. Typically, a salad bar is provided and when one is ready for the meat entrees, flip the toggle to show green on the top. Each waiter has a meat specialty on a skewer and when you indicate you are ready for them by flipping the toggle, each waiter will come and offer you a portion of the meats of your choice. It is a memorable way to sample a bit of the many types of meats prepared to your desire, rare, medium, etc.

Later that evening, we were to meet with Mr. **Nivaldo Lang** and family. Nivaldo was born in Rio Negro, but his ancestors came from Bori, Bucovina. Nivaldo's wife is **Maria Estela Schneider Ferreira Ramos Lang** and they have nine children. We were fortunate to meet most of the children with spouses and grandchildren that evening, as they were celebrating a baby shower.

When I met Nivaldo at the door, I greeted him in the Boehm-deutsch dialect. He looked surprised and started speaking to me in the written German. His physical appearance mirrored other Langs that I have met. The family was extremely hospitable and several of the children attempted to speak basic English with me and I attempted Portuguese with them. Amazingly, we could make ourselves understood. An amusing event occurred, when a small girl, age 3 or 4, made an observation that made the others laugh. With the help of the professor's translation, it appears the little girl thought that I was a movie star...after all, I could speak English.

The time spent there was too short, but the pleasant memories will remain. I look forward to the time when I can again return to Brazil to create more memories."

SOCIETY BUSINESS

The annual business meeting of the Bukovina Society was held during Bukovinafest 2000. Board of Director terms of **Joe Erbert, Bernie Zerfas, Ralph Honas, and Darrell Seibel** expired and the membership reelected them to another term. Following the convention the board met for election of officers and reelected the same slate. The International Board was expanded by the addition of **Rebecca Hageman, Dr. Sophie Welisch and Wilfred Uhren**.

ANIKA

The Bukovina Society has reproduced an out of print book written by **Anne-Marie Hilgarth** and originally published in England by Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd. in 1980. **Dr. Sophie Welisch**, a frequent contributing author and translator for Bukovina Society publications, gained permission from the author and publisher for the work which is on sale at Gulliver's Books in Hays or by mail from the society.

Anne-Marie was a teen caught up in the Second World War movement of ethnic Germans from their homes in the eastern crown lands of the Austrian Empire. These Germans were attracted to settle frontier lands much like the Germans who migrated into the Russian Empire. Whereas Hitler split with Russia, leaving ethnic Germans at the mercy of Stalin, he made a deal with Austria to resettle the Germans back to the Reichland. This involved uprooting thousands of families, most of whose men were off to war. "The autobiography by Anne-Marie

offers a glimpse of the grim realities which faced the displaced in World War II", according to Dr. Welisch. The young girl was separated from her mother and had only the name and address of a convent of nuns in Austria, home to her aunt. She endured hardships, hunger, and horror to reach her destination and final reunion with her mother. Anne-Marie lives today in England with her husband, children and grandchildren. She revisited the haunts of her childhood a few years ago.

The 30-page book, titled Anika, from her nickname, contains three pictures and the cover is a copy of the original book dust cover. Her father, **Otto Hilgarth**, was a professional woodcarver who learned his craft in Oberammergau. Pictures of two of his famous Stations of the Cross carvings from Zeltweg, Austria are printed in the book. An order form is enclosed with the newsletter, or send \$4.00 to the society to receive it by mail.

BUKOVINA PEOPLE

Welcome to our newest life members of the society.

- **Douglas Reckmann, Portland, OR**
- **Robert and Jean Gaschler, St. Louis, MO**
- **Arnold and Elvira Schoenthaler**

The life member payment is placed in a special endowment fund with the earnings paid to the society annually. This has created a good financial footing for the society. The life members receive all publications of the society and pay no annual dues.

New member **Susan Nordquist-Mead** would like to make contact with persons with information on her family, "My grandfather **Conrad Weber**, grew up in Ostra, Bukovina (his sister remains in Romania, now living near Suceava). His parents are **Johann Weber and Regina Hartinger**. His paternal grandparents are **Conrad Weber and Cecilia Winter**, and maternal grandparents are **Wenzel Hartinger and Theresa Lang**. He tells me that his grandparents were German Bohemians, but did not know their village of origin." Email: iamamomof2@home.com

Van Massirer announced that the Texas German Society and the **German Texas Heritage Society** will meet in joint convention at Waco, Texas April 6-7, 2001. Van will be chairing the program and can be contacted at 124 Canaan Church Road, Crawford, Texas 76638.

Samantha Kerth is looking for family members around the globe. Her grandparents came from **Illischestie, Bukovina**. She has traced her heritage back to the 1600s to an **Antonius Kerth and a Hans Ast/Aust**. Email at: Ahtnamas68@aol.com

BEKAR/BAKER FAMILY REUNION

By: **Joan Galey**

The **Bekar/Baker** family held a reunion this summer, 2000 in the Edmonton, Alberta area. About 200 descendants and relatives of **Josef Pekar and Ludvina Maierhoffer** attended. **Josef and Ludvina** with their family of 10 children emigrated from Paltinossa, Bukovina to Saskatchewan in April, 1912. 6 more children were born in Canada. Names connected to the family are: **Loy, Rieberger, Kwasnicki, Lang, Thiele and Ludwar**.

Some American relatives descended from the Gura Humora and Paltinossa Pekars also attended. These included Anita Busek from Seattle, Wash., Walter and Josephine Reichel from Tacoma, Wash. and Joyce Davis from Gales Ferry, Ct. Their presence enriched our reunion and expanded our awareness of other branches of the family. Bill and Jean Carr of Indianapolis, Mi. sent photos of Paltinossa taken on their Bukovina Society trip in 1996 and which were very much appreciated.

WITCHES, GHOSTS, PROTECTIVE MAGIC: SUPERSTITION IN THE VILLAGE OF EISENAU IN BUKOVINA

By [Renate Gschwendtner](#)

Translated by Sophie A. Welisch

This narrative about ghosts, witchcraft, protective magic and other superstitions is based on examples cited by two women, mother and daughter, from the village of Eisenau in Bukovina.

Eisenau was founded in the early 19th century by ironworkers from the Zips. The Zips (Spis/Szepes) is a territory in eastern Slovakia at the foot of the High Tatra Mountains which, since the 12th-13th centuries, had been settled by Germans brought in by the Hungarian kings to work in the mining industry.

The Austrian nobleman, the knight **Manz** von Mariensee, acquired an iron foundry in Eisenau. In 1808 he recruited skilled workers from the Zips for his Bukovina foundry, among them Gottlieb Oberländer, a foundry worker.

Among his descendants were **Katharina Kattani** (née Oberländer) born in 1864 and her daughter **Gisela Oberländer** (née Kattani), born in 1907.

While her mother Katharina remained steeped in the old superstitious traditions brought from the Zips, their practice by her daughter Gisela gradually fell into disuse. She no longer accepted as true everything that her mother believed, and for many of the superstitious practices she carried out on behalf of her mother she could offer no explanation nor did she question them.

CATTLE PROTECTION. When Katharina Kattani got a new cow and wanted to take it into the stable, she asked her daughter to bring an apron. Gisela had to lay it on the *Stalltirpel* (*Schwelle zum Stall* = doorstep of the stable) and lead the cow over it. This was done to assure that the cow would always return to its stable.

As protection against accidents and illness, Katharina Kattani sprinkled holy water over her cattle and poured it between their hoofs. On January 6, a High Holy Day in the Eastern Orthodox Church, she sent two of her daughters to the neighboring community of Vama to bring fresh holy water for the cattle. A large procession took place there, accompanied by a flag and wooden barrels to carry water drawn from the river. It was very cold. The two small girls had to travel a great distance. As they returned home very chilled with two filled bottles, a relative, Gustav Hannel, happened to be sitting in the parlor. He joked about the holy water. Katharina defended the water and gave as an example of its efficacy that it could be kept until the summer without acquiring a bad odor.

"Naturally it will keep," declared Gustav; "the cold has made it germ-free. That has nothing to do with a blessing or a miracle."

Katharina was a Protestant; nonetheless, for the sake of the valuable cattle, she did not reject the blessings of another religious community.

The words of her relative nonetheless raised doubts, after which she no longer used the holy water.

A horseshoe hung above the stable entrance. As with the holy water, it was to protect the cattle from accidents and illness. Should the cattle sicken despite all the protective measures, the family turned to drastic "healing practices" and for a while "doctored" on their own before finally calling in a veterinarian.

When Gisela Oberländer's sow became ill, she took a piece of mandrake root and bored it through one of the sow's ears. Today it is clear that this torture brought no relief to the animal. But at that time Gisela believed in the advice of the men with "healing knowledge." Eventually she had to summon the veterinarian. But even he could no longer aid the pig infected with red murrain.

At Christmas Gisela Oberländer's cattle got a small piece of "*Klootsch*" (*Kolatschen/Hefekuchen* = leavened cake). When asked the reason for this practice, she could give none other than that her mother had also done it. Possibly this custom stems from the traditional Zipser Christmas cuisine. This called for dishes containing a kernel of new life: peas, corn, poppy seeds, etc., which would enhance fertility. If the cattle were to eat some of this food, their fertility, too, would be increased.

With the Oberländers of the third and fourth generation this practice lapsed into oblivion. After Gisela Oberländer married, she cooked kernels at Christmas only one single time. Since no one was enthused over this dish, she henceforth prepared "*Galuschken*" also known as "*Haluschken*" (stuffed cabbage). This consists of a mixture of pork and rice rolled into a soured cabbage leaf.

WITCHES. In the village there lived two ladies of whom it was said they practiced witchcraft. Their specialization: bewitching the milk out of the cows. At home they had hung a rope and through it they milked the bewitched cows.

One day Gisela Oberländer's friend Della claimed her cow no longer gave milk and blamed [a neighbor lady] for it. The previous day the "witch" had appeared at her stable whereupon the milk failed. Gisela, who was not entirely convinced, asked if the bite of a weasel could not have caused the problem. But Della could not be dissuaded from her witch's story.

In any case, there existed a magical remedy for the situation. For this, it was necessary to resort to the chopping block used to split wood. When not entirely new, it developed a hole in the middle. Milk was poured into this depression. Then a so-called *Tschuflink* was heated and held in the milk. "*Tschuflink*" was the name of a wedge-shaped wooden implement with a chain. It was cut into pieces in the forest and then conveyed forward by the chain.

After Della had practiced her magic, the cow again gave milk and on the very next day the "witch" appeared under some pretext. The magical remedy had "forced" the witch to return to the place of her deed.

When asked specifically why these two Eisenau women were suspected of witchcraft, Gisela Oberländer could only offer a reason for one of them. This woman had supposedly been a mean person who disputed with many people. Once, when she was moving away, her neighbors banged on pots and pans: a sign of derision and contempt.

When the Eisenau villagers departed their homeland in 1940, the alleged witch also went along and after the war lived in Bavaria. The belief in witches had entirely vanished. Yet the woman was still disliked since she had maintained her argumentative ways.

If a person had a problem getting to sleep or suffered from nightmares, one suspected an incubus (*Alp* = evil spirit). An incubus, so one thought, was the soul of a still-living person, usually a female, who left the body during sleep. It sat on the chest of the sleeping person and

compressed it in order to deprive him of air or sucked on the breast to take away his strength.

Gisela Oberländer knew stories about the incubus and heard complaints about the pressure it applied but never experienced it herself. In the Zipsers the incubus was also called *Mahre* or *Mohre* (dialect; *Mahr* = nightmare). In other regions one used the term "*Drud*" [drude = witch]. Gisela Oberländer no longer remembered the remedies against this uncanny entity, the *Drudenfuss* [druda's foot] or the *Drudenstein* [drude's stone], its two other names.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD? Lead smelting, which some people do on January 1 [St. Silvester's Day], took place among the Zipsers on November 30, on St. Andrew's Day. This custom, brought from their homeland, persisted until the twentieth century. They poured smelted tin into water and from the bizarre configurations girls sought to discern the occupation of their future husband.

A broken mirror portended seven years of bad luck. If a black cat crossed one's path, misfortune would follow.

It was said that a girl could see her future husband in a mirror if she stood naked before it on New Year's Eve. Gisela Oberländer knew of this superstition but did not believe it. If her mother glimpsed her bridegroom in this way will remain her secret.

Other means of discerning the future included cards, reading coffee grinds and looking into beans. In Eisenau several women specialized in one or another of these methods.

The Gypsies practiced palmistry as a means of livelihood. Gisela Oberländer's husband, Rudolf, once had his fortune told by a Gypsy. She prophesied wealth and many children. Later he told his granddaughter this story, adding: "And what happened? I have one child and never became rich."

At age fourteen an aunt took Gisela Oberländer along to Pojoritta (village in south Bukovina) to a well-known psychic who read cards. The purpose of the visit was that the aunt learns something about the marital prospects of her two daughters.

Gisela found the psychic's appearance sinister. Everything on or about her was long and thin, especially her fingers. But the girl became increasingly distressed when her aunt asked the psychic to read the cards for her. Now, in advanced age, she can no longer remember the details of the prophesy, although she still recalls the central point: she would marry someone who lived near water.

This was a clever shot, since most of the villages lay along streams and rivers, and it could scarcely be anticipated that Gisela would marry an inhabitant of the Sahara Desert. And indeed it came to pass that the homestead of Gisela's husband lay near the Moldova River. No house in Eisenau was all that far from the river.

Dreams portend the future, or so many Eisenau villagers believed. If one dreamed of dirty water, this meant something bad; if one dreamed of clean water, it foretold something good. Snakes were a sign of enemies with harmful intentions toward you. Black birds symbolized misfortune.

Some people had dream books, which they consulted when a dream caused apprehension. Sigmund Freud's psychological interpretations about dreams had not yet reached Eisenau.

ENCHANTED PLACES. On a northern ridge of the Moldova Valley above Eisenau there was a large cliff protrusion which the inhabitants called "*Trappenstaan*" (*Spurenstein* = footprint stone). On the upper side of the large stone were footprints of animals arranged according to size. It began with those of a horse and cow and got smaller with each imprint.

How these "*Trappen*" (footsteps) got into the stone remained an enigma to the villagers of Eisenau. The saying circulated that an unimaginably long time ago the animals, one after another, pressed their foot into the soft stone.

Gisela Oberländer holds to the veracity of this theory to this very day. She cannot believe that someone could have chiseled the impressions into the rock.

In western Eisenau the valley narrows. Its narrowest point lies near the "Black Cliff," which rises steeply alongside the road. The other side of the road faces the river. Rudolf Oberländer, Gisela's husband, told his granddaughter that this place was "sinister," and that he always hurried when he had to traverse it in the dark. Once he saw something on the cliff which looked like two gleaming eyes, perhaps a wolf, and ran as fast as his legs could carry him.

THE EVIL EYE. The evil eye, attributed to certain people, put fear into the Eisenau Zipsers. In their dialect this phenomenon was called "*Vom Aagen kommen*" (*von den Augen kommen* = coming from the eyes). One believed that evil people, through intensive staring, could will illness and misfortune upon another.

But happily there was a magical defense. Katharina Kattani still remembers well the extinguishing of the [glowing] coals. When one of her daughters complained of a headache, she said: "*Hot dich bidda abea ongeschaat.*" (*Hat dich wieder jemand angeschaut* = someone has looked at you again). Then she brought out an enamel pot with a handle, filled it with well water and threw three glowing coals into it. After starting the ritual, she could utter not one single word. Mentally she repeated three times: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen," each time making the sign of the cross over the coals. The ill person had to imbibe three swallows of the coal water and three

times with the left hand take water from the pot and rub it over her skin. To dry off, she had to use the reverse side of her undershirt and then lie down.

After concluding the ceremony according to old practice, Katharina Kattani carried the remaining water out and cast it toward the garden gate.

CURSING. A feared threat was "*Auf den loss ich a Mess lesn*" (*Auf den lasse ich eine Messe lesen* = On that I will have a mass said). It usually arose out of revenge, after having been offended. Gisela Oberländer was familiar with this threat but knew nothing else about it. Presumably it involved a black mass.

She also recalls a tragic story involving a curse: a girl had been going with a boy in the village for seven years. But the young man's mother presumably wanted another, wealthier woman as her daughter-in-law. This rumor reached the girl and she wrote a letter, expressing her annoyance, to the boy who worked outside the village. She did not seal the envelope and gave it to a co-worker for delivery to him. Since the letter was not sealed and the co-worker could read everything, the young man felt humiliated, broke off relations with the girl, and married the one preferred by his mother.

The embittered girl let him know that she wished him and his children misfortune. And to be sure, his marriage was not a very happy one. His wife was not a good housekeeper. She let the cabbage rot in the barrel and did not empty it until summer. The geese developed a foot sickness because the stable was seldom cleaned. The couple had two children. One died young as the result of an accident, and the other, when an adult, was infertile.

To those who were superstitious, the curse came to pass. Some even thought it recoiled on the curser herself, since she married a man whom she did not love and died childless at a young age.

GHOST STORIES. In Eisenau it was also a popular pastime to tell scary stories. This practice was especially in vogue in the spinning room. Gisela Oberländer recalls one story, which she often heard from a relative from Jakobeny (village in southern Bukovina).

Once upon a time a house was being constructed in Jakobeny. While excavating the cellar, the workers found human bones, which had thoughtlessly been thrown about. After the house had been completed and the owners moved it, noises resounded every midnight, although there was no one to be seen. The family feared greatly, and, since the mischief continued, they summoned a priest for assistance. He blessed every room and gathered up the bones, which were then interred in the cemetery. Henceforth, the owners of the new house enjoyed peace and quiet.

Gisela Oberländer's brother-in-law, Anton Hendel, often recounted his terrifying experience in the cemetery of Eisenau.

Once night as he was homeward bound with his friend Luzezky, they passed the cemetery. It was pitch black, and they were terrified as they suddenly heard a rustling. A dark coil rolled out of the cemetery gate. It looked like a very large ball. As it approached both men, they took to their heels and ran home in panic squarely through the gardens. After that they never went past the cemetery at night. Those who know the habits of the Eisenau villagers wondered if perhaps the two had been in their cups. . . .

Gisela Oberländer had her doubts. Nonetheless, she never went in the vicinity of the cemetery at night.

Once the Oberländers were awakened at about 2:00 a.m. when they heard someone jumping over the garden gate and loud footsteps nearing the house. Since no one knocked, they got out of bed and looked laterally through the curtains. There was no one to be seen, but suddenly they heard a commotion behind the house. Someone was bustling about in the woodpile. It sounded as though he were throwing around the pieces of wood.

Gisela Oberländer's husband, Rudolf, hesitated to go out and check on the situation. "*Dea haat mä aans iban Haap ond beg sei ich* (*Der haut mir eins über den Kopf und weg bin ich* = He'll pop me one across the head and I'll be a goner.)

After a while all became quiet. In the morning the Oberländers first checked their wood. They feared it had been stolen. But the woodpile appeared completely undisturbed. Nothing was missing. They were speechless and could not explain the goings on. Again belief in the supernatural came into play. Had it been a man, they would have seen him. Moreover, he would also have stolen something.

Although Gisela Oberländer did not take so seriously much that caused fear and anxiety in her mother, she was nonetheless raised in the old tradition. Until this day the event remains unresolved for her and she continues to reject a rational explanation. It is possible that someone wanted to play a prank on the family.

BIRTH. Katharina Kattani sometimes recalled that in days of yore very many children died of "*Fraas*." "*Fraas*" is a word in the Zipser dialect and means "*Freis*." *Freis* or "*Freisen*" was a dreaded illness of infants and young children. Various types of cramp attacks were given this name.

Today it is thought that these cramps were caused by unsanitary conditions, spoiled milk-pap or the "*Schnuller*" (= sucking device). At that time infants were given small linen bags filled with bread, sometimes mixed with sugar, on which to suck. These little bags must have been a breeding ground for bacteria, particularly in the summer.

To ward off *Freis* and other illnesses the mother had to repeat the Lord's Prayer into the child's ear immediately after birth. Katharina Kattani did this right after the birth of her granddaughter Edith Oberländer. Gisela Oberländer was no longer so familiar with this practice. She had to be urged to do it by her mother.

Many other customs have long since slipped into oblivion. The ancestors in the Zips had to observe considerably more: a small child could not look into a mirror lest it remain mute. A child's fingernails had to be bitten off; if cut, the child would die. He who looks at a sleeping child, puts it under the spell of the evil eye. When a child is carried to its baptism, a coin is placed on its chest in order that it has money its whole life long. If two loaves of bread are baked together in the oven, the mother had to break them apart over the child. Then it would become clever. Defenses against evil powers include saliva, flowing water, fire and bread.

Katharine Kattani was sometimes summoned when at the birth of a boy a testicle did not slip into the scrotum. Then the "sentence was pronounced" (*abgesprochen*). She stroked the infant several times with the back of the hand from the abdomen to the testicle and said: "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

At that time it was thought that prayer would solve the problem. Today Katharine's daughter, Gisela Oberländer, asks herself if indeed it was not the massaging hand motions that carried the day.

As late as the 1930s, when Gisela Oberländer's daughter was born, people in Eisenau bound their infants tightly into a bundle. Failing to do this, the child would not have straight legs, they thought. A small child was not to be admired and called beautiful lest it come under the spell of the evil eye.

MARRIAGE. Gisela Oberländer still recalls some rules applying to weddings: In a section of the wedding dress one inserted sugar and a piece of bread. A coin was placed in one of the bride's shoes. These customs were to assure that the bridal couple never lacked food and money.

The guest threw crumbs at the bride as she was leaving her parents' home.

En route to the church and at the altar the bride could not turn around. This brought bad luck. Should she happen to step on the groom's foot during the ceremony, she would have the upper hand during her years of marriage.

The bridal couple had to stand so closely together that no one could see between them.

The one who first fell asleep on the wedding night would be the first to die. Even today Gisela Oberländer maintains, "*Da Tatte is zeerscht eingeschlafen. Ich darinner mech noch bi er geschnoacht hot. Maanst, doss a davoa als easchta gestoam is?*" (*Der Vater ist zuerst eingeschlafen. Ich erinnere mich noch, wie er geschnarcht hat. Meinst, dass er deswegen als erster gestorben ist?*) (*Der Vater ist zuerst eingeschlafen. Ich erinnere mich noch, wie ar geschnarcht hat. Mainst, dass ar deswegen als erster gestorben ist?* = Father fell asleep first. I still remember how he snored. Do you think this is the reason he died first?)

She still carried out selective wedding customs in 1950 when her daughter married in Bavaria. To be sure the guests threw rice. "Rice was too expensive in Eisenau," she noted, adding, "I never really believed all this, but I thought 'even if it does not help, at least it can not hurt.'" By 1977 when Gisela's granddaughter married, this tradition had fallen into disuse.

DEATH. Before someone died in the village, there would be an indication of the sad event, or so the Bukovina Zipsers believed.

A black bird, which sat for a long time on the roof of the house or nearby in a tree, was a bad omen. A clock which fell down or a black dog encountered at night similarly signaled calamity.

After Katharina Kattani's death, her daughter Mali (Amalie), insisted that she had heard heavy footsteps under the window during the time her mother was failing. Mali, who had been reading by the light of a lamp, could see no one.

The Kattanis' neighbors maintained they had glimpsed a fourteen-year old girl, who had died shortly before, standing at the corner of the house. She was wearing the white confirmation dress in which she had been buried.

When Katharina Kattani became ill and felt the end approaching, she implored her daughter Gisela to carry out the following customs: the mirror (there was only one) should be covered. Gisela should go to the stable and arouse the cattle. She should place in her mother's coffin a wooden shaving from the threshold of the house and a coin and see to it that the deceased is carried out of the house feet first. The coffin should be set down on the threshold three times.

Gisela Oberländer fulfilled her mother's wishes although to this day she does not know the purpose of all these funeral rites.

A glance at books about superstitions yields clarification: the mirror must be covered in order that the soul not see its reflection. In that case it would always have to return [to earth]. Additionally, the amalgam on the back of the mirror would corrode.

The animals had to be aroused in order that they leave the spot where they found themselves at the time of the death. The deceased could otherwise drag them along with her. The coin served as payment to the evil spirits enabling the soul to travel undisturbed to the next world. The corpse had to be carried out feet first so that the soul did not return. As a sign that the deceased believed in the Holy Trinity, the coffin had to be lowered onto the threshold three times. [Note: No information on the significance of a wooden shaving in the coffin could be found in the literature on the subject. In the event that a reader can offer an explanation, the author would appreciate learning of it.]

CONCLUSION. Gisela Oberländer has been living in Bavaria since 1945. She is ninety-three years old. In contrast to her mother, who tenaciously clung to the old customs brought from the Zips to Bukovina, she was influenced by modern, scientifically enlightened ideas, and, doubting much of the old traditions, does not concern herself about them too much. Nonetheless, the sway of the old superstitions remains so strong that she defends some of them to this day. In answer to her granddaughter's comment that here in Bavaria no one any longer is struck by the evil eye ("*vom Bösen Blick getroffen werde*"), she retorted: "*Chioo, dos is richtig. Ich baas aach nech, bieso dos hie nech meh is.*" (*Ja, das ist richtig. Ich weiss auch nicht wieso das hier nicht mehr ist* = Yes, that is true. I really don't know, why this no longer happens).

Dingolfing, Lower Bavaria, Germany, February 2000

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Gréb, Dr. Julius, *Zipser Volkskunde, Heft 1, III Klasse* (Kesmark and Reichenberg: Verlag für Sudetendeutsche Heimatforschung, 1932).

Hadbawnik, Oskar, *Die Zipser in der Bukowina: Anfang, Aufbau und Ende ihres buchenländischen Bergbaues in den Nordkarpaten* (Munich: Verlag der Landsmannschaft der Buchenlanddeutschen, n.d.).

Rattelmüller, Paul Ernst, '*Der oane kommt, der ander geht*' - *Volksbräuche im Lebenslauf* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1988).

Vasold, Manfred, "'*Der Herr hat's gegeben; der Herr hat's genommen*' - *Säuglingssterblichkeit in Deutschland von 1800 bis heute*" in *Die Zeit*, No. 10 (February 28, 1992), pp. 45-46.

THE MARIAN FOREST CHAPEL: A MEMORIAL FOR THE VILLAGES OF BUCHENHAIN, DUMBRAVA AND CORNU LUNCII IN BUKOVINA, ROMANIA

By Maria Beckers
Translated by Dr. Sophie Welisch

On Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 1991 a Marian Forest Chapel was consecrated in Julbach, Bavaria. Two returning war veterans, who had been in desperate straits during the Second World War, promised at that time that if they returned home safely, they would make a great sacrifice to God and the Mother of God.

One of these men was Markus Heiden, born on October 27, 1926 in Buchenhain (Romanian: Poiana Micului). In 1989 he made an appeal for contributions to all his compatriots, who also had reason to be thankful to the Mother of God that after the war in Germany and after their flight, they were nonetheless able to find such a good homeland. Soon contributions poured in, so that Markus Heiden could begin with his plans for a chapel. At that time he also met Hans Krapf from Julbach, who had already heard of the building project. Faced with a like situation in the war, he had made a similar promise. In order to fulfill their pledges Markus Heiden and Hans Krapf got together to direct the construction of the chapel.

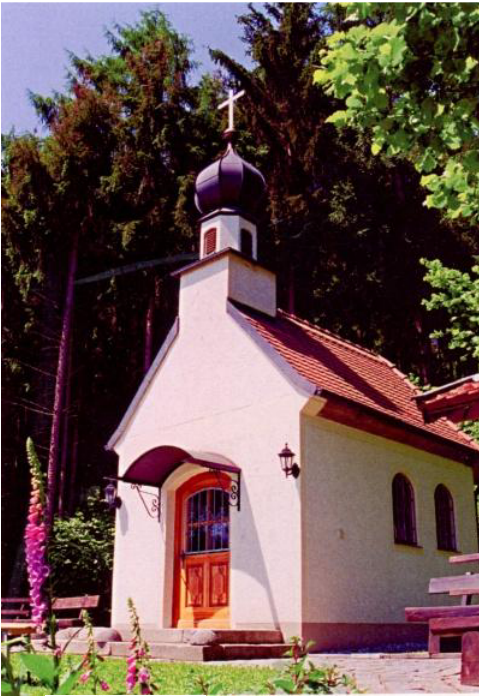
Stories of how construction came about raised great interest. People suggested to Markus Heiden that he write a book about it. Hans Krapf had already died on February 17, 1996.

Currently Markus Heiden is recording his experiences in a book entitled *Mein Versprechen* (My Promise). This book should initially be ready by the tenth anniversary of the construction of the chapel in May 2000 and offered for sale. Primarily it is also a testament to his compatriots. In it he describes the emigration to Bukovina from the Bohemian Forest in 1838 and the settlement in Buchenhain and the way of life at that time as well as the return to Germany [in 1940] with stops in Styria, Austria and settlement in Upper Silesia [German-occupied] Poland.

In addition he describes his military service during his tender years and the critical circumstances of the difficult battle in which he, staring death in the face, made his great commitment to God and the Mother of God that in the event he were to return home safely, he would offer a great sacrifice on their behalf.

In poignant fashion he describes the construction of the chapel with the consecration and other festivities. In addition, Heiden thanks all who in their own way helped him fulfill his promise and also that of Mr. Hans Krapf.

Since most of the participants were compatriots from his former homeland, the chapel is unofficially called "Buchenhain-Dumbrava-Chapel." In it all the war dead of both villages are enumerated. The chapel stands on a small elevation in the midst of the forest: hence, the name "Marian Forest Chapel." In 1987 a powerful hail storm raged in this area and uprooted many trees right on the spot where the chapel would later stand. One might even say that the Mother of God had selected this area for herself. After this [devastation] they got the parcel of land as a gift. With much effort they then cleared the wilderness and began construction of the chapel.



In the meantime this chapel has found great resonance among the population. Not only is its interior beautifully decorated, but its facade is also very attractive. The well-executed onion dome, of which many can be seen in Bavaria, has evoked especially great approbation. Some benches have been placed outside for rest and reflection, so that one can also enjoy the enchanting view. People come from all corners of Germany, even from far away, as for example from Australia, America and Romania. After the number of visitors had exceeded well over two thousand, a count was no longer kept.


I would like to take this opportunity to send you some photographs to show you this well-executed chapel and ask, that should you have the opportunity, you also visit it. The experience would be well worth while.

Through this chapel a lovely memorial has been erected for Buchenhain, Dumbrava and Cornu Luncii as well as for the descendants of their former inhabitants.

If you are interested in ordering the book, which will be published in May 2000 (in German) with numerous pictures, please write to: Reimo-Verlag, Am Mitterfeld 3, 85445, Oberding/Bavaria Germany.

[Top of Page](#)

[Back to Newsletter List](#)

 Hit Counter Visitors since July 5, 2002

Last Revised: 07/13/03 01:22:49 AM



Copyright © 1991-2004, [Bukovina Society of the Americas](#)

[Webmasters:](#)

Werner Zoglauer zoglauer@bukovinasociety.org & Rebecca Hageman rhageman@bukovinasociety.org