

The Bukovina Society of the Americas NEWSLETTER

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Membership Dues:
Lifetime \$150.00
Annual \$15.00

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The annual meeting of the Bukovina Society of the Americas, a Kansas not for profit corporation, will be held at the headquarters in Ellis, Kansas on Monday, September 27, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. Election of board members for expired terms and regular business of the organization will be conducted. Paid members, annual or lifetime, are eligible to vote and may request agenda topics.

PEOPLE AND EVENTS

- Welcome to our newest life member number 193, Beverly & Eric Sidman of Norton, Ks.
- The tribute by Nicholas Kristof to his father Ladis, as reprinted in this issue, brought about a suggestion that the *Newsletter* have a series on the early Bukovina immigrants. We welcome any submissions of this type on someone you may have known, parents, other ancestors, neighbors, etc. Photos, especially of historical value are also welcome.
- Society Vice President O. M. Windholz gave the dinner presentation on German heritage in Ellis County for the 2010 Leadership Kansas class during their three-day session in Hays. The group completes six of these throughout the state. The organization has educated leaders in all walks of business, education and life for 32 years.
- The East European Genealogical Society is sponsoring a seminar on October 2, 2010 on Galicia. Red River College in Winnipeg, MB is the site for the full day with topics including record keeping, locating records, reading and analyzing records and languages (including Cyrillic). More details are available at www.eegsociety.org.
- Nicole Eller and Alfred Wildfeuer will visit the Ellis area again as part of their dialect research project for their home universities in Germany. They will arrive August 17 for a week's work.
- George L. Glotzbach, who is involved with the German-American Heritage Collection from New Ulm, Minnesota,

contacted Oren Windholz last year. They have been mailing each other information about our communities. George wants to find out more about the German Heritage of Ellis County as well as share information about their German community in New Ulm, where the Hermann Monument Society and the German-Bohemian Heritage Society are located. George will be in Hays on Monday, August 23rd. He has indicated that he would like to meet and talk to as many different folks associated with the German Heritage of Ellis County including those involved with the events, museums, attractions, churches, music, language, genealogy and historical collections. Some of our members are also members of the GBHS. Their website is: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gbhs/>

- The annual meeting of the Texas State Genealogical Society will be hosted by the Central Texas Genealogical Society at the Hilton in Waco, Texas on November 4-6, 2010. Representing CTGS as general chair for the event is Van Massier of Crawford, Texas. He is a member of the CTGS board of directors and also a member of the International Board of the Bukovina Society of the Americas. During the event, CTGS will host a party at their new genealogical library in the West Waco Library and Genealogy Center on Thursday evening, Nov. 4. CTGS is looking forward to showcasing their facility as well as other research opportunities in Waco. For more information about the event, please contact Van Massier by e-mail at vmassier@yahoo.com.
- Speakers of the Zipser German dialect known as *Outzäpersch* (*Altzipserisch*) or *Potooksch* are being sought for a research project. Chelmnica, once called Hoppgarten, is a community in the northeastern Spis (German: Zips) mountains in Slovakia. Germans are still predominant here: 680 of the 800 residents are Germans. It is a little cultural reservoir. Once again a German school and kindergarten exist here and with the continued birth of children, it appears that they will continue to function for the foreseeable future. The old Zipser *Tracht*, or costume, is being worn. Amongst themselves, the people still speak *Outzäpersch* (*Altzipserisch*) or

Potoosch, an archaic but beautiful and melodious dialect. For more information about the project, please contact Julius Loisch, 4815 N. Parkway, Kokomo IN 46901-3940.

- “A Source of Data on Protestant Parishes in the Austrian Empire” was recently published in *East European Genealogist* (Winnipeg: Spring 2010, pages 6-23). It was written by William F. Hoffmann, He is the editor of *Rodziny*, the Journal of the Polish Genealogical Society of America, and is also the current editor of *East European Genealogist* (the EEGS publication). The article relates specifically to Bukovina and is drawn from the 1869 book *Die evangelische Kirche Oesterreichs in den deutsch-slavischen Laendern* [the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Austria in the German-Slavic countries] by Dr. Julius A. Kolatschek. Cost of a single issue is \$11 for non-members. For more information, see the East European Genealogy Society’s website at www.eegsociety.org or contact them at PO Box 2536, Winnipeg MB R3C 4A7 Canada. Their email address is info@eegsociety.org.

BERNIE ZERFAS REMEMBERED

By O. M. Windholz



Charter member Bernie Zerfas died on June 9, 2010 near his 94th birthday. In the 20 years I knew him, I witnessed his two greatest loves, next to family, the Lutheran faith and the Bukovina Society. On the day the Society was founded he was asked to be Treasurer and along with those duties, was involved in every project, large or small. Just a few years ago, he reluctantly gave up his board and financial position due to health issues. Not too long after, he said, “I wish I had not quit, it gave me a reason to get up in the morning.” His contributions to our heritage involved more than just rolling up his sleeves to work. He contributed substantial oral history to the 1987 book by Irmgard Ellingson, *The Bukovina Germans in Kansas: A 200-Year History of the Lutheran Swabians*, which had a role in the foundation of the Bukovina Society. His was a key interview on the Swabian German dialect study conducted by the University of Kansas. He was quick to join the life member program shortly after it was started. He was soft spoken, but you did listen when he talked with such wisdom.

Through the ongoing communication by the board via email, numerous tributes and remembrances came into the Society from people who were “grateful to have known him”. The comments included, “We also remember watching Bernie and Irene dance as they glided so smoothly around the dance floor”. He spent his 90th birthday with over 400 friends and family at a dinner and dance, greeting everyone and dancing with most of the ladies.

The Bukovina Society is grateful to the family for sharing him with us and naming the BSA as a recipient of memorial contributions.

MY FATHER’S GIFT TO ME

By: Nicholas D. Kristof

Published: June 18, 2010 in The New York Times,
reprinted by permission of the author

When I was 12, my father came and spoke to my seventh-grade class. I remember feeling proud, for my rural school was impressed by a visit from a university professor. But I also recall being embarrassed – at my dad’s strong Slavic accent, at his refugee origins, at his “differentness.”

I’m back at my childhood home and reflecting on all this because abruptly I find myself fatherless on Father’s Day. My dad died a few days ago at age 91, after a storybook life – devoted above all to his only child.

Reporting on poverty and absentee fathers has taught me what a gift fatherhood is: I know I won the lottery of life by having loving, caring parents. There’s another reason I feel indebted to my father, and it has to do with those embarrassing foreign ways: his willingness to leave everything familiar behind in the quest for a new world that would provide opportunity even for a refugee’s children.

My father, an Armenian, was born in a country that no longer exists, Austria-Hungary, in a way of life that no longer exists. The family was in the nobility, living on an estate of thousands of acres – and then came World War II.

My father was imprisoned by the Nazis for helping spy on their military presence in Poland. He bribed his way out of prison, but other relatives died at Auschwitz for spying. Then the Soviet Union grabbed the region and absorbed it into Ukraine, and other relatives died in Siberian labor camps.

Penniless, my father fled on horseback to Romania but saw that a Communist country would afford a future neither for him nor his offspring. So he headed toward the West, swimming across the Danube River on a moonless night. On the Yugoslav side of the river, he was captured and sent to a concentration camp and then an asbestos mine and a logging camp. After two years, he was able to flee to Italy and then to France.

My father found that despite his fluent French and university education, France did not embrace refugees. Even children of refugees were regarded as less than fully French.

So he boarded a ship in 1952 to the United States, the land of opportunity – even though English was not among the seven languages that he spoke. His first purchase was a copy of the Sunday New York Times, with which he began to teach himself an eighth language.

He arrived as Vladislav Krzysztofowicz, but no American could pronounce that. So he shortened it to Ladis Kristof.

After working in an Oregon logging camp to earn money and learn English, he started university all over again at the age of 34, at Reed College. He earned his doctorate at the University of Chicago, where he met my mother, Jane, and in his 40s he began a career as a political science professor, eventually winding up at

Portland State University.

Because he never forgot what it is to be needy, my dad was attentive to other people's needs. Infuriatingly so. He picked up every hitchhiker and drove them miles out of his way; if they needed a place to sleep, he offered our couch.

Seeking an echo of his old estate, my dad settled us on a farm, which he equipped with tractors and an extraordinary 30,000-volume library: From chain saws to the complete works of Hegel (in German), our farm has it all.

At the age of 80, my father still chopped firewood as fast as I did. In his late 80s, he climbed the highest tree on our farm each spring to photograph our cherry orchard in bloom. At 90, he still hunted.

I know that such a long and rich life is to be celebrated, not mourned. I know that his values and outlook survive because they are woven into my fabric. But my heart still aches terribly.

As I grew up, I came to admire my father's foreign manners as emblems of any immigrant's gift to his children. When I was in college, I copied out a statement of his:

"War, want and concentration camps, exile from home and homeland, these have made me hate strife among men, but they have not made me lose faith in the future of mankind. ... If man has been able to create the arts, the sciences and the material civilization we know in America, why should he be judged powerless to create justice, fraternity and peace?"

I taped it to my dorm room wall, but I didn't tell him. It felt too awkward. And now it's too late. Even this column comes a few days too late.

So my message for Father's Day is simple: Celebrate the bequest of fatherhood with something simpler, deeper and truer than an artificial verse on a store-bought card. Speak and hug from your heart and soul – while there is still time.

THE FRANZ MASSIRER HISTORY

By: Van Massirer

Part I

Foreword:

I am a great-grandson of Franz and Margaretha Loess Massirer through the lineage of their son, Phillip. Born on the original family farm in 1936, I have lived here continuously except for a ten-year span of college and military days. Early in life, I developed an appreciation for my Austrian/German heritage, an interest in my family history, and a special attachment to the land that three generations of my forebears had tilled. I have spent countless hours asking questions and listening to older family members tell stories about the past. This article is both a recollection of some of those stories and a result of research in numerous other sources.

In the late 1980s, I became acquainted with Paul Massier, a

distant cousin, who had a considerable amount of information on his lineage back to the mid-1500s in both Germany and Austria. However, I was unable to connect my family with his until more recently when a German researcher-friend, Erich Slawski, provided the details to make the necessary connections. I am indeed grateful to both Paul and Erich for their very unselfish contributions to my family history.

In 2004, my daughter, Laura, and I were very fortunate to be able to visit the little village of Polowce, where our ancestors lived after they emigrated from Germany to Austria in 1785. On that same trip, we also visited the village of Hattgenstein in the present day Rhineland-Pfalz area in southwestern Germany, where our ancestors lived before they immigrated to Austria. It was a rewarding and emotional experience to walk in the footsteps of our ancestors, and we recommend it for anyone seriously interested in family heritage.

The Massirer Family in Texas

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, German-speaking people began leaving their homelands to seek better economic opportunities in other lands. The Hapsburg rulers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were aware of this exodus and encouraged people from southwestern Germany to settle in the sparsely populated provinces of Galicia and Bukovina in the far eastern part of the empire. Immigrants were offered a relocation allowance, housing, farm land, farming tools, draft animals, seeds, and an initial stipend to cover expenses until the first crop was harvested. In addition, they were promised freedom from taxation and military conscription for a certain number of years.

These freedoms and benefits represented a major improvement for Germans, who were still living in virtual serfdom, where the nobility owned the land and the serfs worked for the nobility in exchange for small garden plots for growing food. To emigrate, serfs had to request permission from the nobility, and when permission was granted, it came saddled with a 20% tax on everything the serfs owned.

Still another enticement for immigration was the promise for freedom of religion. However, the Hapsburgs were Catholics, and the state religion in Austria was Catholicism, while the immigrants were nearly all Protestants. In reality, the promise of religious freedom did not amount to complete freedom, and there were restrictions on how and where Protestant churches could be built. As an example, Protestant churches could not have a steeple, nor could their entrances face the street. Among the Protestant groups, Lutherans fared better than Baptists and Mennonites, who had to conduct their services in secrecy.

The province of Galicia, in what is now Ukraine and Romania, was intended mainly as a temporary stopover for the immigrants, with the neighboring province of Bukovina, just to the south, as the ultimate destination. Although the Austrian government had promised to have housing ready when the immigrants arrived, bureaucratic bungling on the part of lower-level government workers delayed some of the building projects. The temporary stopover eventually became permanent for some of the immigrants, as it was with a part of the Massirer family, who had departed Germany in 1785. Although the known history of the Massirer family dates

to the middle 1500s in Germany, this article begins with the birth of Franz in Austria.

Franz Massirer was born January 18, 1842, in Polowce (village), Chortkov (district), Galicia (province), Austria. His father was Johann Adam Michael Jacob Massirer, born September 16, 1822, and his mother was Katherina Margaretha Lander, born in 1823. Church records indicate they lived in house number 173 at the time of Franz's birth and later in number 178. It should be pointed out here that Austria lost much of its empire at the conclusion of World War I, and the village of Polowce is now in Ukraine and is known as Polovtsy.

Franz married Katharina Margaretha Loess in about 1868. The surname Loess is actually Loss in German with an umlaut (two dots) over the o but is anglicized by adding the -e and dropping the umlaut.

Although Franz's obituary indicates that he and Margaretha had ten children, we can account for only the seven who survived to adulthood. Since infant mortality rates were quite high during the 1800s, we can only assume that the remaining three did not survive past childhood. One undocumented story has it that a teenage daughter died from an illness contracted when she got wet and cold while helping the family harvest potatoes. Still another family story tells of an incident involving an older daughter hitting a younger one in the head with a hoe and killing her. Whether these are true stories is not known and most likely never will be.

Other than general information that applied to all of the German families, little is known about the early years of Franz and Margaretha's lives in Austria. Although few Austrian church records have been located to document Franz's birth or religious affiliation, all of his direct ancestors were Lutherans. However, it is known and documented that he became associated with the Baptist faith when he was baptized by the Rev. Ferdinand Massier on June 22, 1884. Ferdinand was a roving Baptist missionary in Galicia and Bukovina, and although he and Franz spelled their surnames slightly differently, they were cousins. Variations in the spelling of names were not at all uncommon, with at least seven variations noted in the Massirer name between the mid-1500s and the present time.

In 1892, approximately 107 years after the first Massirer immigrated to Austria, Franz and his family immigrated to Texas. While the Austrian government had provided approximately 40 acres of free land to each of the original immigrant families when they came from Germany in 1785, that land had been divided and passed on to the oldest son in each succeeding generation, according to the principle of primogeniture. After four or five generations had each taken its share, there was not enough land left to support a family. It was probably this reason, coupled with stories circulating about better opportunities existing in America, that prompted Franz and his family to make the long, arduous, and expensive move to Texas.

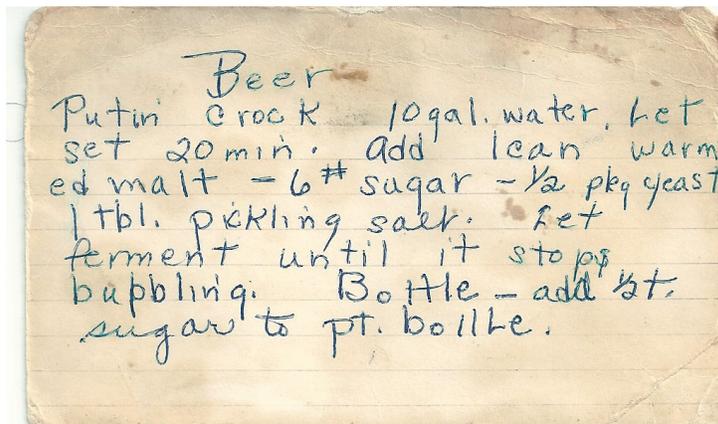
After obtaining permission to leave and selling their belongings to finance the trip, Franz, Margaretha, and six of their seven children set out, most likely by train, for Bremen, Germany. The oldest daughter, Elizabeth, was already married and did not accompany her parents, but she and her husband, John Landfried, did immi-

grate two years later. In Bremen, Franz made arrangements for the sea voyage across the north Atlantic and purchased eight tickets on the steamship Darmstadt. While we do not have an exact cost for the tickets, copies of advertisements promoting immigration in the 1890s suggest that the total fare for one adult from Bremen to New York and then on to Waco, Texas, was approximately \$45. Since the Bremen ship records were destroyed during World War II, we do not have an exact date for the Darmstadt's departure, but the records at Ellis Island in New York indicate that the ship arrived there on June 6, 1892. Also travelling on the Darmstadt with the Massirers was Franz's sister, Magdalena Lander, her husband Nicolaus, and their five children. How the two families travelled from New York to Texas is not known, but the most economical method at the time would have been by ship to the coast of Texas and then inland by rail to either Crawford or Gatesville.

Franz had at least one other sister, Susanna, who born on February 20, 1847. She married Cristoph Hehn and was his second wife. The surname Hehn was sometimes spelled Hohn with an umlaut over the o and was anglicized to Hoehn after Cristoph died and Susanna and the children immigrated to America in 1896. Cristoph already had one son, Peter, by his first wife, and then he and Susanna had four more sons - Fred, Phillip, Jakob, Casper - and one daughter, Julia. Two other children died in infancy while the family was still in Austria. Susanna later married Martin Selzer in Texas. When she died in 1921, she was interred in the Valley View Cemetery at Valley View, Texas.

Recently uncovered information suggests that Franz may have had as many as fifteen siblings, but since that information has not been thoroughly checked, this article will list only the two known sisters.

The final destination for Franz and his family, as well as for his sisters and their families, was in the far western part of McLennan County and the far eastern part of Coryell County in central Texas. Rather than being a luck-of-the-draw destination, it was a chosen one, for here lived other Austrian families and relatives, such as the Gauer family, who had immigrated earlier and no doubt sent good reports back to the homeland. For Franz, there was yet another compelling reason to settle in this particular area, and that was the presence of a newly organized German Baptist congregation. The records of the Canaan Baptist Church indicate that he soon became involved with church activities and served as a member of various committees.



Copy of Beer recipe brought in by an elder Bukovina German for the museum.