



The Bukovina Society of the Americas NEWSLETTER

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Membership Dues:
Lifetime \$150.00
Annual \$25.00

SOCIETY NEWS & EVENTS

- The Board of Directors of the Bukovina Society decided not to conduct the annual meeting in person due to the Covid crisis. An email was sent asking for a vote by members on the annual Board vacancies. Nominated and elected were: Marcy McClelland, Rebecca Hageman, Douglas Reckmann and Jeff Seibel. The board will continue to conduct the business of the Society by phone or email.
- We welcome the upgrade to life membership of Betty Tornow and Ilse Nikolic.
- Thanks to Oliver Ast from Germany who sent a donation to the Society via the website.
- Robert Saunders from Australia sent to the Society a copy of his wife's family history from Solca in the former Bukovina to the US. It is one chapter from his website and offers readers an interesting story of their heritage. Read at: <http://www.saundersfamilyhistory.com/>
- Luzian Geier sent the following website featuring photos and family stories: <http://tereblestie.com/en/blog-uk/>
- Finding aids for Galicia and Bukovina from the University of Alberta: https://sites.ualberta.ca/~ukrville/Family_History_Portal/fhp.htm

Our family comes from the area northeast of Regensburg from today's border area between Bavaria and the Czech Republic, formerly Bohemia. The name Augustin was very common there back then and still is today. After the Thirty Years' War, a population equalization took place between Bavaria and Bohemia, through which the name Augustin also spread in the areas of the northern Bohemian Forest.

Sometime in the second half of the 17th century, our oldest known ancestor Georg Augustin (1648 - 1718) moved from Lamer Winkel on the Bavarian side to the Ganglhof on the Bohemian side, just across the border.

Three generations later, Georg's great-grandson Johann Augustin (1770 - 1839) lived hand to mouth working as a manual laborer in at least two of the numerous glassworks near Seewiesen in Bohemia. The industrialization at the end of the 18th century in Europe led to a decline in glass production in this area. Johann decided to emigrate, and in the spring of 1803 he and his wife and three sons followed a group of lumberjacks to Bukowina, around 1,500 kilometers east, in what is now Romania. The Habsburg monarchy had peacefully incorporated this now southeastern tip of their empire only a few decades earlier and was now striving to promote economic development there, among other things, by building glassworks. The members of this group all came from the area of Seewiesen and had been specifically commissioned by government agencies for the glassworks in Fürstenthal, west of the district capital Radautz, which was newly founded on the forested foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Johann and his family were the only bearers of the Augustin name who emigrated to Bukovina. (Three generations later, three Augustin families emigrated from the northern Bohemian Forest to Rio Negro in southern Brazil and founded a large offspring there.)

Although glass production in Bukovina no longer provided a livelihood for Johann's sons, the number of his descendants grew steadily. To date, 7,649 of these have been recorded by name.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF OUR AUGUSTIN FAMILY HISTORY

By: Michael Augustin

The name of our family is derived from the male first name Augustin(us), which in turn comes from the Latin word "augustus = consecrated, venerable, sublime". It spread throughout the Middle Ages through the veneration of the saint of the same name across the whole of Christian Europe. At the time of the formation of family names towards the end of the Middle Ages, the name Augustin established itself in numerous modifications independently of one another in different places in Europe.

For a century, the Catholic German Bohemians mostly married among themselves and did not mix much with the other German-speaking immigrants and almost never with members of the other ethnic groups represented in Bukovina. The offspring spatially spread out of the narrow Fürstenthal valley to the east and then in the plains along waterways in a counterclockwise direction to the north to today's border with Ukraine and beyond.

The growing population pressure led to another wave of emigration for our family at the end of the 19th century, this time to North America. In the three decades before World War I, 19 individuals and families set out for the New World in search of a better future. Only two of those did not make it in their new home and returned to Bukovina disappointed, while two sisters who emigrated married in Canada and returned with their husbands as "made people". A great-grandson of Johann Augustin, Josef Augustin (1866 - 1938) and his family followed the relatives of his wife to Regina in Saskatchewan in southern Canada. There are also numerous descendants of him today, but the name Augustin no longer occurs very often there. The sixteen other emigrants - all attracted to the construction of the railroad, cheap farmland, and the family members and compatriots who already lived there - went to the small town of Ellis in Kansas and started a large offspring there. Many of these descendants still live in this very agricultural area in the US Midwest.

Another great grandson of Johann, Josef Augustin (1844 - 1918), emigrated with his family to Sibovska near Prinjavor in Bosnia around 1905. However, except for one son Adolf, all of his descendants and their families were relocated to the German Empire in 1942. After the war, they mostly settled in Austria and West Germany.

After the First World War, the family members who remained in Bukovina suffered the fate of all other Germans there. Because Romania had switched sides before the end of the war, it was one of the victorious powers and now pursued a rigorous nationalization policy towards the other ethnic groups in the country. Gradually the Germans and Austrians, who had held the state for over a century, gradually became an oppressed minority. This was how the ground was prepared for the National Socialists' resettlement campaign "Heim ins Reich" in the autumn of 1940. Even in the interwar period, two descendants of Johann Augustin emigrated to Canada and started a family there. Unlike in previous times, marriages became more diverse and led to an increased mixture of Romanian citizens of German origin with members of numerous other ethnic groups in the country.

Little or nothing is known about the fate of family members who did not want to be relocated in 1940 or who could not do so because of marrying a non-German spouse. They died, were kidnapped or stayed in Romania or in what is now Ukraine. Those who were resettled lived through different

individual fates, but many of them have certain basic features in common. The resettlers were registered in North Bukovina by a German-Russian commission, in South Bukovina by a German-Romanian commission, which also recorded the value of the property left behind with the intent that they would be fully compensated for this when they were resettled. The Deutsche Reichsbahn then took care of the transport of the resettlers to the German Reich, where they were distributed to various camps, mainly in Bavaria, Saxony and Upper Austria. It was here where the classifications took place which included categorization of political beliefs, racial and physical features which was decisive for the further fate of the people. Naturalization also took place here. Men of military age were usually drafted in immediately and mostly came to the front with only a poor training. Many of them were wounded, killed or taken prisoner of war and did not see their relatives at all or only after the war ended. For the rest, there was usually an odd journey through various camps and finally to settlement on a farm in the east, which was at least initially desired. However, these farms had only recently been taken away from their Polish owners by the National Socialists, which is why some of the newcomers also refused to take over these farms.

Towards the end of the war, the resettlers became refugees who tried to escape the advancing Red Army and the anger and hatred of the Polish population. This often failed and there were also deaths, injuries, rapes, deportations and other atrocities. Anyone who managed to escape westward to the territory of the former German Reich generally tried to find their relatives. Certain centers formed in which the refugees from the East, who were mostly not very popular with the local population, settled and began to rebuild their destroyed livelihoods. For our family, these are the areas around Passau in Lower Bavaria, Weilheim in Upper Bavaria, Mindelheim and Wörishofen in Allgäu, Stuttgart in Baden-Württemberg, Penzlin in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Vollersode in Lower Saxony. There were also some in our family that were unable to not make a fresh start in destroyed Germany, and chose to emigrate to the USA or Canada in the 1950s in hopes of a more prosperous future.

The descendants of those who stayed in the West Germany or in East Germany in the German Democratic Republic now live more or less across the entire Republic and are integrated into society in such a way that they are mostly only partially or not at all aware of their individual origins.

GRANDMA BENA

By: Judi Kingry

Note: The following articles are part of a series to be published in the Society Newsletter.

Introduction

Credit for this narrative really belongs to Grandma Bena's

great granddaughters, the Herman sisters Hilda, Mary, Agnes and Isabel, who recorded their memories in “I Remember Mama” stories. These four plus their youngest sister Sara exchanged countless letters researching family history. Their correspondence was filled with tidbits of family information and lots of questions. Where possible, their words are used throughout the story.

The depth and accuracy of the genealogy and immigration data would never have materialized without the research and support of Douglas Reckmann, the wizard behind the BSA Genealogy Database portal. Reckmann’s knowledge, enthusiasm and years of in-depth research in original European and immigration records was invaluable. Thanks also to the Bukovina Society members whose efforts and support continue to inspire. Some facts simply weren’t recorded or have been lost to time. In those cases, explanations are those of the writer.

“A small woman with fire-red hair and a temper to go with it.” Thus Anna Maria Anger Böna was described by Ellis resident Nicholas Riedel, father-in-law of Mary Anna Herman Riedel, Anna Maria’s great granddaughter. Although no confirmed photograph has been found, Anna Maria’s life story paints a vivid picture of a determined, forceful woman who overcame countless challenges in her 90 plus years. Anna Maria spent 74 years in Bukovina, Austria before migrating half way round the world to Kansas.

Anna Maria Anger

Born 22 December 1812 in Altlangendorf Bohemia, Anna Maria was the fourth but only second surviving daughter, born to Barbara Bauer (26) and Johann Nepomuk Anger (27), a tenant farmer in Schwartzthal, Bukovina, Austria. Anna Maria was not yet three years old when her mother Barbara died. Five months later her father remarried and seven siblings followed. Prior to his death 17 May 1870, Anna Maria’s father Johann was widowed and remarried two more times, leaving a total of 8 surviving descendants. Four additional children had died as infants or toddlers. Thus, Anna Maria grew up among a series of stepmothers and half-siblings.

When she was 26, Anna Maria Anger gave birth to a son whom she named Johann Böna, born 9 Dec 1838 in Altlangendorf.

Martinus Böna

Two years after Johann’s birth, Anna Maria Anger (28) married Martinus Böna (30) on 21 Jan 1840 in Altlangendorf. Martinus was born 15 Apr 1810 in Nuserau, BOH. Beginning in 1845 thru 1874, Martinus is listed in local records as a colonus (tenant farmer) in Schwarzthal and Gurahumora BUK.

Anna Maria and Martinus had two more sons, Andreas and Thomas, plus four daughters – Theresia (who married Josef Tauscher), twins Katharina and Barbara plus the youngest Anna Maria.

By 1871 six of Anna Maria and Martinus’s seven children were married and had started families of their own. Only one son, 24-year-old Thomas Böna was single at the time of his father Martinus’ death on 5 Nov 1874. In that era, children tended to remain in the family home until their marriage. Thus we assume, after his father’s death, Thomas and his mother Anna Maria continued to live in the original Böna family home working the farm in his late father’s place.

Based on immigration records, Thomas’s widowed mother, Anna Maria eventually came to the States with her youngest son Thomas, his wife Emilia and their daughters. (Details follow.)

Of Martinus and Anna Maria’s seven children, four married, raised families and eventually died in Bukovina which eventually became part of Romania. They include her eldest son, Johann Böna – and three daughters – Katharina Böna Weber, Barbara Böna Mayer and Anna Maria Böna Weber.

Anna Maria’s other three children – Andreas Böna, Theresia Böna Tauscher and Thomas Böna/Benna – also married in Bukovina and had children. But as the years went by these three families left Bukovina to seek their fortunes in the United States

The surname confusion – Böna, Penner, Bena, Benna

Early records in Bukovina show Martinus’ surname listed as Böna. Why we do not know. His father’s surname is clearly listed as Georg Penner, as are previous male ancestors. However, Böna was the surname on Martinus’s birth record and that he used throughout his life, for his marriage to Anna Maria Anger. The Böna moniker was also passed along to their children and subsequent generations of grandchildren. In 2020, Bukovina Society genealogy records related to the Böna/Penner conundrum were updated by David Reckmann who manages the website <https://bukovinasociety.org/>. David makes changes only when fully supported by his thorough research of original official data.

Over the years, confusion over the Böna – Penner moniker became even greater as descendants migrated to other lands with different languages and individuals adopted different pronunciations and spellings. This created a confusing mix of surnames in the family genealogy. With the exception of Thomas Benna family, it appears Anna Maria, her older son Andreas and his son upon arrival in America, dropped the Böna spelling in preference for a more American “Bena.” To her Ellis area relatives, Anna Maria was simply known as Grandma Bena or Grandma B.

Mary Herman Riedel said, “My grandmother, Theresa Bena Tauscher pronounced her family name “Bwayna” probably the Austrian or Romanian accent. I asked her one time to spell it for me but she was sorry she didn’t know how. My mother, Leopoldina Tauscher Herman thought it might be Bennere or even Bennet.

NAME CHANGES

By: Douglass Reckmann

In Judi Kingry's Penner/Benna/Böna family article, she asks the rhetorical question: How did the family name „Penner“ (so clearly written in the Church records of Langendorf, Bohemia) become „Böna“ in Schwarzthal as recorded in the Catholic church records in Gurahumora? And with the name so clearly written „Böna“ in the Gurahumora church records, why did the family name become „Benna“ or „Bena“ when family members immigrated to the US in 1886, '87, and '88? The answer is a combination of the effects of dialect, the lack of native German speakers as priests (who were keeping the records!), and the fact that in the 1880's, most people could not read or write, nor could they sign their own names.

In preparation of this article, I attempted to find and note references of the family of Martin Penner in the church records of Bukovina. The earliest record found was the birth record of Martin's son Andreas in Radautz in 1842. Here, the family name was spelled „Penner.“

Within two years, Martin Penner settled in Schwarzthal. Births, deaths, and marriages were recorded in Gurahumora. Most of the metrical records from Gurahumora have been found and made available after their dispersal in WWII. However, the birth records from between 1836 and 1856 are missing. The index to these records shows that between 1845 and 1852, the name was written „Böna“ in the birth records.

When Andreas Penner/Böna was married in Gurahumora in 1865, the name „Penner“ was written in the marriage book. His brother Johann Penner/Böna was married in 1867, but this time the family name was spelled „Benna.“ For the other 5 siblings who married later, the family name was recorded as „Böna.“ Martin Penner's death in 1874, along with his marriage witness references in 1845, 1856, 1863, and 1864 were all recorded as Martin „Böna.“ A priest wrote the record, Martin's name as a witness, and Martin dutifully added his „X.“

In the German-Bohemian dialect, „Bs“ and „Ps“ are pronounced similarly, and the „er“ at the end is often not distinctly pronounced. (Quickly say „Penner, Benner, Penner, Benner, Penner, Benner.“ Then „swallow“ the „er“ and say „Penna, Benna, Penna, Benna, Penna, Benna.“) A German-Bohemian would be a „Deutsch-Böhmer“ in Germany, but in Bukovina, the dialect it would make it close to „Deitsch-Bem.“ At this time, many of the Catholic priests in Bukovina were from Poland and were thus NOT native German speakers. The records maintained by the church in Gurahumora (or any other village in Bukovina), would reflect the previously recorded spelling of a family name or a dutiful transliteration of the name that the recorder heard into standard German.

Thus the spelling change of the name „Penner“ to „Böna“ along with the continuation of the pronunciation of the name as „Benna.“