



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 established dates for the next convention, September 16-17, 2022 in Ellis and Hays, Kansas. Interesting and entertaining presentations on our Bukovina heritage will span the two days and evenings. For new members/attendees to see examples, prior fests are posted on the Society website. Go to LIBRARY on the top, then scroll down to BUKOVINA FESTIVALS, the last being in 2017. There are no registration fees, but advance reservations will greatly assist facility and food planning. Please respond to the email or postal addresses above. In the event of another Covid travel problem before the Fest, we will post current information on the BSA website and a personal notice sent to those pre-registered.
- The annual meeting of the Bukovina Society was conducted on Tuesday, July 20th at 4:00 p.m. at the headquarters in Ellis, Kansas. After introductions and approval of the financial report, the minutes of the last annual meeting, which was through email due to Covid, were approved. This meeting was conducted by members present and on Zoom, thanks to IT specialist Tim Flax. Election of members to expiring board terms were: Shirley Kuppetz, Guy Windholz, Darrell Seibel and Erin Rogers. The committee for restoration of the museum building continues to seek matching grants. However, the funds donated to date will be used for this purpose regardless of grants.
- The Board of Directors met following the annual meeting. Officers elected for the ensuing year are: Oren Windholz, President, Martha McClelland, Guy Windholz, Treasurer and Erin Rogers, Secretary. The board approved dates for Bukovinafest 2022 and considerable discussion ensued on potential presentations.
- Welcome to new life members: 266 Karl and Chanda Lang, 267 Sharon LaChappelle, 268 Manfred Gross, 269 Tim & Michele Flax, 270 Teresa J Fischer, and 271 Daniela Fritsch
- Additional donors to the restoration fund: Jared & Kim Windholz-Spletstoser, Juanita Augustine, and Tim & Michele Flax.

- The 100th Anniversary of the dedication of St. John's Lutheran Church, north of Ellis, KS was recognized on July 25, 2021. 2022 will see the 125th anniversary of the founding by Swabian Lutherans from Bukovina.

Recent visitors to the Bukovina Society and Ellis, Kansas were Mark Wilpolt of Chico, California, and his sister, Carrie Wilpolt, of Pepperell, Massachusetts. Mark has inherited his late brother Jay's numerous genealogical files, pictures, and interest in the Schuster and Aschenbrenner family histories and heritage. Both took great interest in the museum displays and learned about the culture and lifestyle of the Bukovina ancestors and descendants, while Mark, a musician, took special interest in the instruments on display. During the visit, Mark presented the Society with the Kaiser Family History book, written in part by Mary Kaiser Conard, a Schuster cousin who grew up in the Ellis area, and authored a number of stories about the Schuster family. Afterward, we were accompanied to lunch by cousin Norma Lang, who shared her family recipe for Galushkis.

As Mark had a strong desire to walk in the footsteps of our late mother, Teresa (Terry) Schuster Wilpolt, we enjoyed the "Art Walk" down Washington Street. A phone call to uncle Richard Schuster helped to locate Grandpa Frank's three family homes on 10th street, and the family farm a few miles away in Trego County.

Carrie and Mark were guests of their half-sister, Becky Hageman of Wichita, board member of the Bukovina Society, and her husband John. Special thanks to Oren and Pat Windholz and Norma Lang for opening the building and explaining the significance of the museum's treasures.

Visits are now about one per week from all over the country to the museum and that is significant in that we don't have open hours and only give tours by appointment. Even this requires hours of volunteer time.

Dale Winslow and his brother Gary have a goal to visit and learn of the history of every county in the State and included the Society museum in their journey.

BUKOVINA STATUETTE ON DISPLAY

By: Brandon Hines, Hays Public Library Director

When the Hays Public Library remodel committee began working with architects and designers in 2019, it did not take long to realize how transformative the upcoming remodel was going to be. The first library building was erected in 1911. The current building was constructed in 1961 and was expanded and remodeled in 2004. There was a mass of history in the building and many items that helped not only share the history of the library, but the history of the community. The library contains several interesting and unique items from over the years that tells not only the story about the library but also the history of the community. Finding homes for the items in the new space took a great amount of planning and prioritizing.

One of these items includes the *Madonna and Child* statue which is on permanent loan to the library from the Bukovina Society of the Americas. The statue's history that predates its 1835 trip through the Carpathian Mountains, and was obviously one of the artifacts at the library deserving of a place to be showcased.

Among the founders of the village of Bori in Bukovina, Christoph Reichhardt and wife, Magdalena Kohlruss, safely delivered the *Madonna and Child* statue to their new home of Bori in 1835. Upon arrival, the statue was placed in the family's *Herrgottswinkell* (God's corner) in their living quarters. A more detailed history of the statue is displayed next to it at the Hays Public Library in the form of a September 2007 article in *The Bukovina Society of the America's Newsletter* titled "The Long Journey" by Sophie A. Welisch.

The statue is now proudly displayed in the Schmidt Community Commons in a beautifully redesigned space near the front of the Hays Public Library. It shares the space with other historical pieces important to the Hays community. The Schmidt Community Commons is a bright and engaging space frequented by hundreds of patrons every day. It is a great place to read, visit, or study.

The library remodel project began with initial planning in 2019. Construction began the summer of 2020 with project completion in June of 2021. A ribbon cutting and celebration took place June 18th, 2021. Most of the main floor and second floor of the library was remodeled, with extensive changes made to the collections and public spaces.

While the library offers resources and activities that are sure to be of value and engage any person, the Hays Public Library's Dorothy D. Richards Kansas Room offers a vast collection of print and digital resources for those seeking to discover more

about local history, genealogy, and general history about Kansas and the Great Plains. Kansas Room Coordinator, Jeremy Gill, provides professional help to visitors as they access the collection and as they retrieve and share information.

The library prides itself on being a valuable resource for the community. Furthermore, we take great pride in our relationships with other entities and engaging our community. It is a true honor to be able to showcase the *Madonna and Child* statue loaned to us by The Bukovina Society of the Americas. We invite you to experience the many stories we have to share throughout the library.

The Hays Public Library and Kansas Room are open seven days per week. More information about the library can be found at www.hayslibrary.org, by calling 785-625-9014, or visiting 1205 Main St., Hays, KS.

FROM BUKOWINA TO KANSAS AND BACK AGAIN

The fate of the Returnees

By: Michael Augustin

In his book "Bohemian Germans in Kansas," Oren Windholz describes in detail how the ethnic Germans in general and the Augustin(e) family in particular settled in Ellis County. One of the first settlers was Franz Flachs (1846-1914) from Pojana Mikului (German Buchenhain). He married Franziska Augustin (1855-1918) from Fürstenthal in 1873 and emigrated to Ellis, KS with her and their five children at the beginning of September 1887. Four more children were born in Kansas, although one of them died in the first few years of life. Franz Flachs, among others, traveled back to his old homeland several times in order to persuade his compatriots to emigrate as well and to help them. They were responsible, in part, for helping to populate the area. The couple not only contributed numerous offspring themselves, but in total in the years preceding the First World War, around 35 families and 10 individuals from Bukovina followed their advice and emigrated.

They had particular success with the family of his wife Franziska Augustin. The daughter of Mathias Augustin and Elisabeth Stadler, she was the oldest of the eight surviving children (three others had died as small children). Her father died of lung failure in 1877 at the age of only 50, shortly before the birth of his youngest son Rudolf. Against this background, it becomes understandable why, in addition to several cousins, four other siblings followed their older sister to the New World: Franz (1857-?), married Anna Gaschler, Anna (1861-1938), married Josef Schuster, Jakob (1875-1945), married Johanna Straub, and Rudolf (1877-1942), married Ottilia Kohlruss. However, two of these five siblings, the brothers Franz and Jakob, returned to their old homeland. Up until now, very little was known about the fate of these returnees. In fact, only that Jakob's daughter Elisabeth, who was born in Ellis in 1904, married

Josef Wild from Karlsberg, a neighboring village of Fürstenthal. After the Second World War, Josef made a name for himself as a homeland researcher and in particular, published a local monograph on Fürstenthal in 1982. This summarizes what had been known until recently about these members of the Augustin family.

With the assistance of Alfred Wanza, who maintains the German-language website "Bukowinafreunde.de", I was put in contact with Edeltraud Rösler, née Wild, from Garching near Munich. She is the youngest daughter of Josef Wild and Elisabeth Augustin. She was able to tell me the story of her grandfather Jakob and his family after their return from the United States. This is the story that I will relate.

Jakob Augustin and Johanna Straub had three children, all of whom were born in Ellis: Franz (1901-1958), Elisabeth (1904-1980) and Paulina (1907- approx. 1910) whose memory was left in the New World. Jakob and Johanna later spoke of the "good years" in the States, but Jakob fell ill (probably as a result of a lung disease) and had persistent health issues, which was attributed by the family to the climate. As his condition worsened, he and his family decided to return to Fürstenthal. His brother Franz made the same decision, however the year and the exact circumstances regarding the return of the two brothers and their families is still unknown.

In his old homeland, Jakob's health was obviously better again. He worked as a wheel-maker and blacksmith, his wife Johanna ran a small grocery store. Their son Franz married Aurelia Brodner. They had no children. Franz died in Görisried, Germany near Kempten in the Allgäu at the beginning of 1958. Their daughter Elisabeth married Josef Wild from nearby Karlsberg in 1924. The two lived in Fürstenthal and had five children before they were resettled, one of whom died at six months. Josef worked for the Romanian financial administration from 1928 until the resettlement in 1940.

In 1940, Jakob and Johanna were relocated together with their daughter Elisabeth's family. They came to the Jodbad-Sulzbrunn resettlement camp near Sulzberg Germany in the Kempten district. Josef got a job at the tax office in Kempten and Elisabeth was able to earn some extra money sewing. At first it looked like the extended family would stay together in the Allgäu. In 1941, however, Jakob and Johanna were supposed to be settled in the Warthegau in Poland, while Josef and his family could stay in Kempten. They did not want to be separated, and decided to settle in the East together. On the way through several camps, the youngest daughter Edeltraud, to whom I owe most of the information about this branch of the family, was born in Sosnowitz, northeast of Kattowitz, at the end of November 1941. Pregnant women were usually separated from their families and sent to a dedicated hospital camp. Since Elisabeth did not want to be separated from the family, she had hidden her pregnancy, and Edeltraud was born during an air raid under the light of a flashlight.

In June of 1942, the family was finally settled in Służewo,

Poland, a small town about 10 kilometers south of Thorn (Toruń in Polish) in a former nursery. Elisabeth's parents were housed in the nearby village of Aleksandrów Kujawski and were thus able to actively support their daughter's family. Her husband Josef was employed by the tax authorities in Lesau (Włocławek in Polish), and their eldest daughter Anna was employed by the district office in Lesau. The photos from that time bear witness to a middle-class lifestyle and modest prosperity, which ended when Josef Wild was finally drafted into the Wehrmacht in November 1944 and his underage son Otto was drafted into the Volkssturm.

The rest of the family stayed together and on January 6, 1945, like all the other Germans from the area, fled with a team of horses to the West from the rapidly approaching Russian army. When they reached Hohensalza (Inowrocław in Polish), a larger town with a train station, the team was requisitioned by fleeing Wehrmacht soldiers, and the food and belongings that they had been able to save was looted by hungry, desperate fugitives and soldiers. In the general confusion, Jakob was separated from the family, and his daughter Elisabeth asked her 14-year-old son Jakob to find and stay with his grandfather. The rest of the family, along with other women and children, were transported further west by train. Upon reuniting with his family, Jakob told how his grandfather and other older men were driven into a cellar and probably shot there. Alone, the grandson Jakob reached the island of Rügen, Germany with a later transport train.

Elisabeth reached the Stolzenfelde estate about 40 kilometers south of Stettin, Poland with the other children, her mother and other refugees. Today the place is called Trzcіńsko-Zdrój. It was soon taken over by the Russians. During the three months on the estate, the family witnessed and were also victims of numerous attacks and atrocities by Russian soldiers against the German civilian population.

When Elisabeth found out about the end of the war in early May 1945, she knew that under no circumstances could she stay in the East. With nothing but a small cart, some blankets and groceries, she moved south with her mother and daughters and crossed over the Oder River somewhere between Küstrin and Frankfurt an der Oder, then to Berlin. From Berlin they went on via Dresden, Bayreuth, and Augsburg to Kempten, and finally to Sulzberg Germany. As a precaution, they had agreed to this place as a meeting point in case they were separated while trying to escape. Other relatives and acquaintances came there as well. It was possible to build on old social contacts, which made their new beginning easier. In May 1946, through the mediation of the Red Cross, Jakob returned from Rügen to his family and reported on the then still uncertain fate of his grandfather, who never appeared again and was pronounced dead in 1955. In July 1947, the eldest son Otto also returned to his family. He had deserted soon after being drafted into the Volkssturm and had set out on foot from Warsaw to the West. He traveled at night avoiding the streets, only guided by the stars in the sky. His health was very poor: he was half starved, but otherwise uninjured. His father, Josef Wild, did not return

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until January 1950, physically battered and traumatized from being a prisoner of war in Russia, which he had survived despite several serious illnesses and injuries.

However, the whole family managed to get back into social life and prosper again. All their children got married and, with the exception of the oldest daughter Anna, had children. Josef again worked as a tax clerk and was a dedicated homeland researcher until the end of his life. In 1982, together with other authors, he published the homeland book about Fürstenthal, which has already been mentioned. He died in 1990 in the hospital in Künzelsau, Germany, just a few days after his 90th birthday. His wife Elisabeth had died ten years earlier on her husband's 80th birthday at the age of 76 in Kempten. Her mother Johanna died in Sulzberg in mid-1951 at the age of 70.

At this point in time, nothing more is known of Jakob's brother Franz and his family after their return to the homeland.



The annual Wild West Fest parade in downtown Hays had entries of two antique vehicles owned by Alex Begler. He drove a truck featuring a railroad conductor representing the RR museum in Ellis. Guy Windholz drove the auto for the Bukovina Society with passengers Marcy McClelland, Eileen Goetz and Pat Windholz.