



# The Bukovina Society of the Americas NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 81, Ellis, KS 67637-0081 USA

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Membership Dues:  
Lifetime \$150.00  
Annual \$25.00

## SOCIETY NEWS & EVENTS

- The annual meeting of the Bukovina Society was conducted on Saturday, September 14, 2024 via Zoom at 1:30 CDT, Doug Reckmann presiding. Thanks to Katy Schuster Luck for setting up the system. Notice to members to participate was given in the September 2024 Newsletter with instructions on logging in. After approval of the prior annual meeting minutes and financial statements, board members were elected to a three-year term: Guy Windholz and Shirley Kuppetz and Vashti Waldschmidt for an original term with one vacancy. The board elected the present officers for a new one-year term.
- Luzian Geier of the Bukovina organizations in Germany sent a notice that the oldest women from Bukovina died on September of this year. Irmgard Uhrich was born in Czernowitz over 110 years ago. By marriage she had surnames of Remner and Genthe.
- Welcome new life members # 320, Georg Fassott, #321 Haley Nargang and #322 Amy Scrivner.
- The Society board welcomes new board member, Vashti Waldschmidt. She and her siblings and all enjoy historic sites. Vashti was home schooled with her siblings before receiving a full scholarship to attend Barton County (Kansas) Community College where she graduated with an associate degree in Veterinary Science. She is employed by the Hays Veterinary Hospital as the office manager. When Vashti was asked of her interest in joining the board, she expressed her interest to see to the preservation of her Grandfather's family genealogy work and research. She went on to say, "Grandpa would share stories with our family, particularly of his growing up and about in Germany."

## HILLSIDE DANCE PAVILION

Photo courtesy of John and Alex Begler



Hillside Pavilion  
aka "Ratslight"  
Ellis, Kansas  
Herman Erbert - Owner

A night club outside of Ellis, Kansas was a hot spot for parties in the 1930s and 40s. Nicknamed the "Ratslight" it featured an outdoor dance venue. The Hillside Pavilion was established and owned by Herman Erbert, a swashbuckling entrepreneur described by Alex Begler in the following article. who had a toe in a number of business and promotional ventures. Herman was the first Ellis resident to fly in a commercial airplane, the route from Hays stopped in Hoisington, Salina and Kansas City, a trip of three hours.

The Hillside opened with the music of the Club Royal. Several good-sized Erbert men worked as bouncers, just the presence of which kept the rowdies quiet. One night supplies ran low and Herman had the choice to send the bouncers to town to resupply the club or risk lack of protection. Sure enough, before the bouncers could get back a fight broke out with order soon restored.

Photo courtesy of Alex Begler



## HERMAN ERBERT

By: Alex Begler

I was asked to send information on this pocket screwdriver I recently bought. I bought it on Ebay and it was from a seller in Newton, KS. I don't know how this person acquired this but many times items are purchased at estate sales and offered for resale. This could have been part of a collection of screw drivers similar to this or it's possible whoever had owned it possibly had a connection to Ellis and Erbert Motor Co but that's unknown.

STAR Automobiles were made by Durant Motors from 1922 to 1928. Herman Erbert opened Erbert Motor Company in 1926 so he only sold STAR Automobiles for a very short period of time. I haven't seen much on STAR Automobiles at Erbert Motor Co past 1927 in the ads. He sold a wide range of cars of many makes & models and also sold numerous makes of farm implements among many other things in a way to build his business. He probably made most of his money from bootlegging. He also rented building space at the Erbert Motor Co building as well as across the street on Jefferson and had also built a few apartment buildings around Ellis. A few other business prospects he had were the Erbert Beer Garden located in the Erbert Motor Co building and the "Ratslight" located north of Ellis. Adding to this was a gold mine near Boulder Colorado and businesses he had at Burlington Colorado. In his early years Herman was part owner of the Erbert Drug Store in Ellis in 1913/14. He was a tire dealer before opening Erbert Motor Co

It was in 1926 that he took his STAR Car to Dean Hill for a race against the local Ellis Chrysler Dealer, J.J. Berry who accepted the challenge to see who could get to the top of Dean Hill first. 5000 spectators showed up to see the STAR Car win the race by a fraction of a second and a challenge by J.J. Berry for a rematch at a later date wasn't accepted. J.J. Berry had also opened his Chrysler dealership in 1926 as well as Chrysler had

only formed his company in 1925. The first Chrysler car sold in Ellis was purchased by Doodle McDonald.

William Durant had been in charge of General Motors and due to a falling out he started Durant Motors. While in charge of General Motors, William Durant had hired Walter P. Chrysler to lead the Buick Division. Chrysler later left Buick and eventually formed the Chrysler Corporation after acquiring Maxwell Motors.



## THE PUBLICATION AND RELEASE OF ZITA JOHANA WATZLAWIK'S FAMILY ANCESTRAL BOOK

By: Doug Reckman

On August 25th, the BSA received an email regarding the very successful presentation of Zita Johana Watzlawik's documentation in book form of her family's emigration From Bukovina to South America in the pre- and post-WWI era. No, not Brazil, but Argentina! An article in the June 2024 BSA

Newsletter introduced Zita to our readers with the story of her family's immigration to the US in 2000 and her son Hernan's discovery of the the Bukovina Society of the Americas.



In 2021, the BSA received a request for help from another Argentinian requesting help finding documentation of her Bukovina ancestors. I connected her with Zita. Zita's response informed me that her daughter Sandra, and Sandra's children had made the commitment to support her in her goal of documenting her ancestor's immigration to South America. The names and dates that she sent me about her father and his parents, although meager, still allowed me to discover her family's Bukovina connection. Many of the various church records in Bukovina are incomplete, however we were very lucky when I found the birth record of Zita's father in Augustendorf on 4 April 1908. That information allowed me to locate her ancestral family connection in Klostermühle in Bohemia. And the rest, they say, is history... Zita has graciously donated a copy of her book to the BSA Library. The BSA is so very lucky to have a proudly dedicated and active Life Member who has documented and published her family's history for her relatives, descendants, and posterity.

Following is a slightly edited version of the letter that Zita Johana Watzlawik sent to the BSA.



25 August 2024

Douglas Reckmann, President

Members of the BSA I am sending you some photos and a summary of what happened at the presentation of my book on June 14th in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was an unforgettable

day for the entire Watzlawik/Waclawik family. I gathered more than 50 direct descendants (of my grandfather, Ludwig Watzlawik) in addition to 30 in-laws and friends. Among the 50 relatives who were present, there were 22 young people who came with their parents, my first and second cousins. They all commented to me that they were very interested in having (a copy of) the book because they had always been confused about our origins. It was exciting to see their happy faces when they received the signed and personalized books that I gave them.

This whole event was possible because of the unconditional family interaction, both in Los Angeles and in Buenos Aires. At the event, (via) the family members who were present, I sent 42 books dedicated to my nieces, nephews, grand nephews, and grandnieces who have emigrated from Buenos Aires to London, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Brazil, also including those who live in various provinces of Argentina 2 thousand km away from Buenos Aires. A cousin of mine was very excited to receive the book, and asked me for another copy for his daughter who was emigrating to Spain that week and wanted to take the book (with her). I replied: "Delighted, not only for her but also for your other 5 children." In recent years I have been in contact with many of them by email and they (always) asked me about our ancestral history (because) they did not know (anything about it).

I started my Genealogical research more than 12 years ago. First through the help of my Brazilian friends, Professor Ayrton Gonçalves Celestino and João Nelson Hoffmann, and eventually Douglas Reckmann via the Bukovina Society of the Americas. These people have helped me in many ways, providing me with much diverse data and information. Following are some of the responses to me from the fourth generation descendants in Argentina, the young ones, the grandchildren of my cousins, that moved my soul:

1. My parents sent me to study at a German school, and I never knew that we had German roots. Thank you for your ancestral work.
2. We are siblings of Waclawik descent. We thought (that) we were the only ones. Now, thanks to you contacting us, we suddenly know that we belong to a huge family with a rich history of ancestor. We are indescribably happy!
3. For me, this book is like having a treasure in my life.
4. Thank you for this enormous historical work for our entire family.
5. When I was a teenager, I was thinking of settling in Germany, and I asked my parents about some documentation to get a passport.

They replied: "We do not have any documentation of our origin." Imagine, Zita, how happy I am to have this book. I have replied to all of them, that I am also immensely happy to have been able to leave them (a) legacy, where I (can) tell the fascinating story of our ancestors. Zita Johana Watzlawik

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