



THE GOTTSCHEE TREE

Newsletter of the History and Genealogy of Gottscheers
and Their Descendants

Volume 1, Number 4

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The purpose of this newsletter is to: (1) exchange family history and genealogical data; (2) provide information about individuals from Gottschee and their descendants; (3) inform readers of Gottschee history; and (4) promote interest in current Gottschee events.

A SUMMER VISIT TO GOTTSCHEE

by Ida Schober

This June, after visiting my husband's family in Austria, we took our two daughters to Gottschee. We wanted to find Schlechtbüchel (Slaba gorica) where our house used to stand, and our old Weinkeller in Strassenberg. My father is Josef Kobetitsch, my mother Lini (b.) Roschitsch of Grodetz (Grodéc). The hills of Gottschee are gentler than the South Tyrol, though with the houses and fields cleared as in the old days, the landscape must have been similar. Here and there we saw signs of former habitation: garden flowers gone wild, fruit trees overgrown with vines, and parts of crumbling stone walls.

In the vineyards there are still some of the old "Weinkellers" such as the one we found belonging to the Kobetitsch family. We would have loved to have gone inside, but the present owner wasn't there that day. The cottage is now surrounded by dozens of others built in the last few years by townspeople who bought a piece of a vineyard and built a weekend house on it.

We stood on the old stone steps and had a breathtaking view of the vineyard and Črnomelj (Tschernembl) below. The grape arbour beside the cellar door was still shading the roadside bench where passers-by, I am told, had always been invited to sit and have a glass of wine.

Visiting Gottscheers have a difficult time finding their way around because of recent construction. Roads have been rerouted, and some churches and wayside chapels have been torn down. Most of the people we met were very friendly and tried to give us directions, mostly by sign

language. Several of them even brought out bottles of wine and Sligowitz ("Brontbein" - plum brandy). They waved cheerfully and perhaps somewhat amusedly to us as we drove back and forth searching for our home.

After searching an entire day we were lucky to have found someone to show us (continued on page 2, column 2)

SPOTLIGHT ON...

JOHN NICK (1886-1960)

John Nick, born in House #9, Schäflein (Ovčjak), was the son of Johann Nick and Gertrude Rositsch (Slovenian sp. Rozic). He and his two brothers, Karl (1888-1947, m: Mary Sterbenz from Rossbüchel) and Matthias (1891-??, m: Mary Schuster from Altenmarkt), emigrated in the early 1900s.

John and Katherina Fugina (b: 1884 in Čeplje) married in 1907 in Brooklyn. They lived in Kansas City until they moved to Wichita in 1916-1917. By this time they had had five children: two had died in childbirth or as infants, the three living sons were William (1908-1975), John (b: 1914), and Matthew (1917-1987). In February 1920, Katherina gave birth to her sixth child. The infant died at birth. Katherina died the following day. John returned to Kansas City. The next year he married Marie Stimpfl. They had three sons: Richard, Frank, and Joseph.

Throughout his life, John Nick continued the family tradition of winemaking. (His father had a vineyard in Maierle.) His grandchildren looked forward to their visits with him as they knew they would always have a taste of "Grandpa's wine". (Source: John Nick, Marceline, Missouri)

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FROM THE EDITOR

This issue marks the first year of the publication The Gottschee Tree. Thanks to you, this newsletter is a success. Your sharing of information through written queries and articles have enabled other subscribers to learn about their family heritage. Your suggestions as to the type of articles to be featured have improved the quality of this newsletter. With your support, The Gottschee Tree will continue to be an informative and useful newsletter.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

ST. NICHOLAS DAY, December 6, was celebrated in Gottschee when "Krampas" appeared. All prayed when the Bishop came, and the children were delighted with his gifts. (Kikel 1947:32)

The custom continued in the United States. Dorothy Smythe of Kansas City writes that on St. Nicholas day, children gathered in the living room, while the spirit of St. Nick threw nuts and candy through the front door. That same night, the children placed their shoes beside their beds. If they were good, their shoes were filled with oranges and candy; if not, the shoes were filled with coal. As Dorothy writes: "we were told to pray while waiting for the spirit of St. Nick, and we did pray!"

GOTTSCHEEER DIALECT was the native and everyday language of the Gottscheer. Although High German was used by the government prior to 1918, the Gottscheer retained the dialect for everyday use (Petschauer, 1984:103, 107). Following is a list of village names used in this issue.

German	Gottscheer	Slovenian
Grodetz	Grodetz	Gradec
Rotenstein	Roatnstoin	Rdeci kamen
Schäflein	Scheflein	Ovčjak
Schalkendorf	Schaokendoarf	Salka vas
Schlechtbüchel	Schlachtpiechl	Slaba gorica
Seele	Sheale	Zelnje

VISIT TO GOTTSCHEE

(continued from page 1, column 2)

the way. Driving a surprisingly long way up the mountain on a badly rutted and overgrown road, our guide, Franz Maleric, described things as they used to be. He showed us the remains of the school in Schäflein (Ovčjak), and the flowers the schoolchildren had planted. A very short distance later we came out into a clearing where he pointed out Schlechtbüchel (Slabagorica). Where our house used to stand, there is now only a pile of rubble.

We were astonished at the beauty of this place high atop the hill. We appeared to be at the very top of a mountain surrounded by gently sloping hills that rolled far down into the valley and then up the other side, blurring into the horizon. An old pear tree that my father had planted stood there across the road and a huge linden tree still grew behind us. The stones of our neighbors' house, the Jellens, were still intact, and a roof had been added to make a hunter's cabin. The trees were glistening from an earlier rain, and we parted the wet grasses to see the grey rocks of the house. It was a timeless, pristine moment as we were struck with the ageless beauty of this mountain.

We stood on the road in front of the house's foundation and looked down into the valley. We tried to imagine how it was fifty years ago and hundreds of years before that.

We really enjoyed our visit. Our daughters said they will always remember the cartoon like quality of our search back and forth on that hillside. The happy, cheerful mood never left us, and as we drove away, many of the people waved, amused and relieved that we had finally found what we were searching for.

(Written by Ida Schober, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)

HOUSE NAMES and numbers were used in Gottschee to identify one's home. However there is little documentation on the use of "house names". Write what you recall about this practice. Give examples of the house name, the corresponding house number, and the name of the village. Information received may be used in future articles.

Any information on this subject will be greatly appreciated. Mail to Elizabeth Nick, Liz Information Service, P.O. Box 725, Louisville, Colorado 80027-0725.

DATA EXCHANGE

(1) The following data was found in the International Genealogical Index, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Library.

Anna Kobetitsch born 06 July 1900 in Brooklyn, New York in Kings County. Her brother, Herman Kobetitsch, born 13 January 1904 in Brooklyn. Their parents: Agnes Verderber and Mathias Kobetitsch.

Mariam Kobetitsch baptized 11 March 1872, Immaculate Conception Church, St. Joseph, Missouri. Parents: Cochem Kobetitsch and Anna Thabor. Sponsors: Maria Thabor and Jacob Behr.

(2) Church records of Catholic churches in St. Joseph, Missouri filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah include Immaculate Conception 1860-1966; St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral 1846-1966 (baptismal records 1856-1903); St. Stanislaus 1913-1965; and St. Patrick 1869-1966.

(3) Microfilm of original marriage records of Jackson County Courthouse in Kansas City, Missouri are available from the Mormon Library. Marriage records are for the years 1881-1916. Also on microfilm are two indexes: the Groom Index 1881-1937 and the Bride Index 1881-1937.

The indexes are in alphabetical order. For example, one microfilm reel contains the Groom Index, letters J-L. These records (49 microfilm reels) were filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah in 1977. They can be rented through your local Branch Genealogical Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

USE OF THE MORMON LIBRARY

An excellent source of inexpensive, genealogical data is your local Mormon branch genealogical library. The official church name is the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints".

One of the indexes available at the branch libraries is the International Genealogical Index (IGI). This index is a microfiche listing of surnames in alphabetical order by state (and within the state, by county) and by country. Once you have found the surname you are looking for, you can rent the microfilm with the complete record from Salt Lake's Genealogical Library for a small fee of \$2.00 plus postage.

To find the branch, nearest you, look in the business section of your local telephone book under the name of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

QUERIES

(1) I would appreciate any information about Frank Pfeifer (he had a brother named Joseph). In 1913 Frank lived in San Francisco, California and was about to travel to British Columbia. A later photo of Frank showed him in a World War I Army uniform. He was a cousin to my mother, Frances Sterbenz, and her sister, Mary Sterbenz of Kansas City, Kansas. Submitted by Dorothy Smythe, 1706 North 77 Terrace, Kansas City, Kansas 66112.

(2) I am researching all of the Strutzels (Struzel, Strucel, Strucelt, Struczl, Strucely, Strucl, etc.) families worldwide. I would appreciate any information on these family names. Submitted by Jeff Struzel, P.O. Box 3014, Redondo Beach, California 90277.

(3) I am trying to find a connection between various Schleimer families. There appears to be less than 100 families in the U.S. with this name. The name Schleimer seems to originate in Gottschee.

My Schleimer family came from #51 Schalkendorf. I would also appreciate any information on the Hutter family from #12 Schalkendorf, the Schneider family from #43 Seele (about 1862) and related Jaklitsch and Honigmann families.

My great-grandfather, Franz Schleimer, married Magdalena Schneider (1862-1947). Magdalena's parents were Georg Schneider and Maria Honigmann. Franz and Magdalena had four children (maybe five); Magdalena (1890-1977), Rudolph (1892-1973), Mary (1897-1963), and Paul (1900-1978). Rudolph (my grandfather), married Marie Hutter (b:1894), daughter of Joseph Hutter and Marie Jaklitsch. I would be more than happy to share what information I already have. Submitted by Robert R. Schleimer, 441 Eaton Blvd., Grafton, Ohio 44044.

(4) I am looking for information on Gertrude Schneider, b:1867 in Gottschee. She married Josef Hoge (born 1857 in Rotenstein), and after marriage, lived in House #17 in Rotenstein (Rdeci kamen). Any information would be appreciated. Submitted by Elizabeth Nick, 174 South Hoover Avenue, Louisville, Colorado 80027.

DEADLINE for Data Exchange and Queries for the next issue is March 1, 1988. The deadline for articles is February 1, 1988.

BENSON'S THESIS ON GOTTSCHEE

Thomas Benson (1968) wrote his Master of Arts thesis on the history of Gottschee. It is entitled Gottschee: A History of a German Community In Slovenia (Yugoslavia) from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century.

The thesis is a short, concise history of Gottschee from its beginning in the 13th century to its end in the 1940s. The four chapters are: (1) Early History to 1918; (2) Volksdeutsche 1918-1941; (3) Resettlement 1941-1945; and (4) Refugees 1945.

Included in the text are three graphs, nine pictures, and sixteen maps. The maps are valuable to help one visualize events that occurred in the past. Nine of the maps and two of the charts are from Herbert Otterstadt's (1962) book. Benson does provide English translations.

A list of village names with the number of houses in each village, is located in Appendix 2. The list is from a publication by Josef Perz (1926). The names are in German, Gottscheerisch, and Slovene. Villages are grouped according to their "Gemeinde" or community.

Benson's thesis can be borrowed from Adelphi University, Garden City, New York 11530 through an inter-library loan from your local library.

OWNERS OF THE GOTTSCHEE

- 1330 Owned by the Counts of Ortenburg.
- 1420 Ortenburg family died out, Gottscheers became the subjects of the Counts of Cilli.
- 1456 Annexed by the House of Hapsburg.
- 1507 Territory of Gottschee is leased for money to Earl von Turn.
- 1547 Leased to Count Stephen Blagay.
- 1574 Gottschee subject to the Hapsburg Archduke Carl in Graz.
- 1618 Ferdinand II of the Styria line of the Hapsburgs, bought Gottschee.
- 1619 Count Khysel purchased "The Gottschee" from Ferdinand II.
- 1641 Count Wolfgang Engelbrecht von Auersperg purchased The Gottschee from Count Khysel. Gottschee remained in the Auersperg family until 1918.
- 1918 The Gottschee became part of the newly formed country of Yugoslavia.

(Source: Benson, 1968)



THE RIGHT TO PEDDLE AND TRADE was granted to Gottscheers in 1492 by Emperor Frederick III. Linen and wooden household goods were items traded by the Gottscheers (Kikel 1947:28). In 1571 and 1596, the privilege of the right to a limited free trade was increased.

In 1780, Empress Maria Theresa granted the inhabitants of Gottschee the right to peddle candy, fruit, and other commodities throughout the empire (Benson, 1968:24). The traders were successful in the fruit trade, as fruit was obtained from the Adriatic and traded throughout the empire. According to Petschauer (1984, 80-81), "...talented peddlers had gradually taken up the trade with tropical fruits. From the large cities of the monarchy, they ultimately controlled for quite some time during the nineteenth century almost the entire importation of tropical fruits in Central Europe".

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"Die Siedlungen des Gottscheerlandes" Gottscheer Kalender 1926 Celje, 1926.

Petschauer, Erich

"Das Jahrhundertbuch": Gottschee and Its People Through the Centuries. Completed by Hermann Petschauer, translated by Herma Moschner. New York: Gottscheer Relief Association, Inc. 1984.

The book by Petschauer may be purchased from the
Gottschee Relief Association
657 Fairview Avenue
Ridgewood, New York 11385.