

The Gottschee Tree



The Gottschee Tree

The purpose of this journal is to publish articles, family histories, interview, book reviews, and historical information to inform Gottscheers about their history and descendants. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Association or its officers. Members may submit their articles and family histories to the Editor, P.O. Box 725, Louisville, Colorado 80027.

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Front Cover

The family photo, taken in July 1910, is of the George Röthel family, formerly from Stalzern, Thurn, and Brooklyn. It shows George Röthel (b.1863, Stalzern #27) with his wife Margarethe Kump (b.1864, Thurn #1). Standing next to his father is George (b.1892) and Franz (b.1891) is next to his mother. Both boys were born at Thurn #1. In the front row are Edward (b.1901), Louis (b.1905) and John (b.1900). These three boys were born in Brooklyn, New York after the family moved from Thurn in 1899. Two girls, Anna (b.1898) and Maria (b.1899), died prior to 1910, the date of the photo. The second photo is of the city of Gottschee (Kočevje), much as it is today. The background script is from a 1741 Altlag baptismal record for the village of Kletsch (courtesy of Kate Prunte). Finally, the cover was designed by Max Mische and Susan Pomeroy, a graphic artist.

The Gottschee Tree is published quarterly (March, June, September, December) by the Gottscheer Heritage and Genealogy Association, P.O. Box 725, Louisville, Colorado, 80027-0725, a non-profit organization, as a service to its membership. Second-class postage paid at Louisville, Colorado. Printed in the United States.

The Gottschee Tree is available through membership in the Gottscheer Heritage and Genealogy Association. Yearly membership for individuals is \$22.00; family membership is \$27.00. If available, back issues are \$4 for members, \$5 for non-members.

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Wedding Customs of Gottschee

by Fred J. Muschler



Wedding photograph of Rudolf Jonke and Mary Erker in 1931. The bride and groom, with their relatives and friends, are assembled in front of the bride's home. *Sitting on the ground, left to right: Alois Siegmund (from Tiefenreuther), Heinrich and Frank Erker, brothers of the bride., First row: Maria Eppich (nee Schusteritsch), bridesmaid; Josefa and Josef Jonke, parents of the groom; Mr. and Mrs. Poje, uncle and aunt of the bride and also the witnesses; Franz and Josefa Erker, parents of the bride, Sophie Roethel (nee Kresse), bridesmaid. Second row, standing: Anton Pleschinger, usher; the priest who wed the couple; unknown; unknown; Josefa and Franz Jonke, aunt and uncle of the groom; Rudolf Jonke, groom; Mary Erker, bride; Lina Perz; unknown; Mary Perz; unknown; unknown; Franz Jonke, usher. Photo courtesy of Fred J. Muschler.*

The words in italics are in Gottscheerisch unless otherwise noted. Gottscheerisch was the spoken dialect of Gottschee. All that needed to be written, including wedding banners, personal letters, etc., was done in formal German.

In our former homeland Gottschee, when a young man decided on wooing a young lady, he was usually accompanied by a *Barva*. For those who are not familiar with our dialect, the *Barva* related to the German word *Werber* (recruiter), did not accompany the young man because he needed help to convince the young lady he was trying to woo, but rather to work out an agreement with her parents for the size of her dowry.

In the greatest number of cases, the young couple already knew each other and the dowry was taken care of, but there were exceptions when the bride hardly knew the groom. It is kind of unromantic by today's rules, some of our young people might even call it crude, but actually it

was a very handy custom. The son who took over his parents' homestead was expected to provide a nice dowry for all his siblings, so the more he could get out of his future in-laws, the easier it was for him later on. There is an old Gottscheer proverb: *Bues mon shi d'rhairotn khonn, prach mon shi et tse d'rurbaitn.* (What you can gain through marriage, you don't have to work for.)

It has been the custom that on the day when the *Barvare* (the plural form was used because it always included the groom) were expected at the bride's home, she was supposed to stay out of sight until the negotiation was completed. It has been said that in cases where the bride did not know the prospective groom very well, or not at all, she used this opportunity to observe him from an opening in the attic (*Dochlückhe*). When the *Barva* and the parents of the bride had completed their negotiation, the bride was called in and the young couple embraced, prob-

Wedding Customs of Gottschee (*continued*)

ably for the first time in public. Not to disappoint the young women among our readers, there were known cases where the prospective bride did refuse to marry her young man.

If the deal worked out by the Barva was to everyone's satisfaction, it was usually sealed with a toast of homemade cider or brandy. After this, unless both families hailed from the same village, arrangements had to be made for the two families to get acquainted. Arrangements also had to be made at the local rectory in the parish where the wedding was to take place, which was usually in the bride's village.

After getting herself ready for the wedding, she was expected to take care of the *Krantslaisch pintn* (the tying of the wreaths) and also make boutonnières for all the wedding guests. But since the bride was usually busy in the days before her wedding, she delegated this chore to the women in her bridal party. The wreaths were needed to decorate the banners which the young men of the village put up at the entrance of the houses of the bride and groom, and also the banner which was carried in front of the wedding procession on the way to church.

The wedding banners consisted of two saplings, spruce or birch depending on the season, about 10 feet tall, with the lower branches removed with a crossbar at about seven feet high, to which a sign was attached which read *Hoch lebe der Bräutigam* (Long live the groom) or *Hoch lebe die Braut* (Long live the bride), depending upon where it was installed. The sign on the banner carried ahead of the wedding procession read *Hoch lebe das Brautpaar* (Long live the bridal couple) and on the reverse side *Hoch lebe das junge Ehepaar* (Long live the newlyweds).

In the weeks before the wedding, the women in the bridal party invited all their young friends to help them with the *Krantslaischpintn*, an event which was usually held at a local inn about a day or two before the wedding, always in the evening. They hired an accordion player for entertainment, as well as to give a signal on the day the *Krantslaischpintn* was supposed to take place. The accordion player usually started at

one end of the village, playing a snappy march, and soon all the men and women fell in behind him, and as soon as he thought they were all together, he headed for the inn.

At the inn, all the material needed for the wreaths and boutonnières was already in place and so as not to interfere with the women's work, the young men kept out of the way, because they knew the sooner the women were finished the sooner the fun could begin.

As soon as the women were finished and the place straightened up, the accordion player started playing and the bride and groom showed up. It wasn't only that they wanted to join in the fun, it was also their obligation to see to it that there were enough refreshments to go around. It was customary at this party to reserve the last dance, a waltz, for the bridal couple. At the end of this dance, all the people present stood up, surrounded the couple on the floor, and started singing an old song which seems to have been created specifically for this occasion.

*Krantslain pintn b'rt shi nöch abakh,
obr Jüingvra b'rt shi nimmer mear.*
(She might tie some wreaths in the future,
but never again will she be a virgin.)

The end of this song was usually followed by a lot of hugging and kissing, and some shedding of tears, by the female participants of course!

If the bridegroom was from out of town, the journey on the wedding day to his beloved wasn't always simple, for Gottscheer tradition dictated that the inhabitants of the bride's village put all kinds of obstacles in his way. The first obstacle he encountered, as he approached his bride's village, was a barricade across the main road. On seeing this, he sent his best man, who usually traveled with him, to investigate. As the best man approached the barricade, he was met by one of the village elders. On inquiring what the meaning of the barricade was, he was told that according to some old village law, it was illegal to take a marriageable maiden from the village, but that for a reasonable amount of money they might waive this law.

Wedding Customs of Gottschee (continued)

Now "reasonable" could mean almost any amount, so the village elder made sure that it was high enough so that the best man wouldn't be willing to pay. The village elder knew that the crowd assembled around the barricade did not come to see the groom but rather the spectacle that was going to happen, when he was trying to haggle his way out of this precarious situation. After the village elder lowered the amount to a figure the best man was willing to pay - which was usually the price of several liters of wine - the barricade was removed, the crowd dispersed, and the groom and his best man were on their way.

But this didn't always mean that it was clear sailing for them from there on in. In some villages, the family of the bride tried to delay him further by making believe they had forgotten about the wedding all together and were performing all kinds of chores around the house. When the groom finally insisted on seeing his bride, they sent out an old woman dressed like a gypsy. Finally, they gave in and the wedding procession got under way.

The wedding procession was set up as follows: first the accordion player, followed by the two young men carrying the banner, the bride led by the two ushers, the groom led by two bridesmaids, the two witnesses (best man and maid of honor), the bridal couple's parents, and other relatives and invited guests. On the way back from church, the wedding procession was lined up almost the same as before, the only difference was that the sign facing to the front read *Hoch lebe das junge Ehepaar* and the bride walked on the groom's arm, and the bridesmaids on the ushers' arms. The wedding was held either at the bride's home or at an inn, depending on the financial background of the bride's parents.

At the beginning of the wedding when the dinner was served, another custom could be observed, namely the custom of *Tsüpfn* (tugging). Here the children of the neighborhood hid under the tables, and as soon as the food was served, they started tugging at the clothes of the guests. The guest familiar with this custom handed them morsels of food. In more

recent times, the bride put candy on the tables for this purpose.

After the people were finished with the meal and after some dancing, it was time for the wedding guests to hand over the presents for the newlyweds. At a signal from the best man, the accordion player started playing a familiar ditty which went like this.

*Tsüha lai tsüha, Praitigonsch Vuetr,
ar b'rt shi et v'rdriessn, ar b'rt a Tular schiessn,
shini shani shai, Linko Lanko vlai,
ar b'rt shi et v'rdriessn ar b'rt a Tular schiessn.*

Come closer, come closer, (the name of the person, in this case the groom's father) do not be bashful and part with a dollar. (*Shini shani shai* was probably just a fill in. The next line, *Linko Lanko vlai, Linko Lanko* are female names and *vlai* means to flee. So it can be assumed they were asked to stay out of the way, so as not to interfere with the men's generosity.)

Wedding presents in Gottschee consisted almost always of cash and the handing over of the present was called *schtekhn*. With this out of the way, the accordion player started playing another familiar song: *Schön ist die Jugend zu frohen Zeiten*" (It is good to be young in happy times). This was the signal for the bride to be unveiled, so all the guests chimed in while assembling in front of the bride's table and watched the bridesmaids remove the bride's veil. This completed, the newlyweds said their goodbyes and left the room.

Note: I tried to include as many of our Gottscheer customs in this article as possible, but it is by no means complete. In Gottschee, like in most other countries or provinces, customs differed from region to region. For the greater part of the material in this article, I am indebted to the late Mrs. Maria Schusteritsch of Schalkendorf (now of Mahopac, New York), Mrs. Marie Jonke of Seele (now of Mahopac, New York); Mrs. Marie Schleimer of Seele, (now of Hawley, PA), and Mrs. Maria Rankel of Verdreng, (now of Walden, New York).■

The Good Masters of Gottschee

by Edward Skender

This article draws on Georg Widmer's "Documentary Excerpts from the History of Gottschee, 1406-1627," which is currently being translated due to the efforts of the author. This book is valuable because it contains important documents that directly relate to the earliest history of Gottschee (Editor's note).

Georg Widmer tells us in his book that the ownership of the feudal domain of Gottschee changed hands three times in the 36 years between 1420 and 1456. The Counts of Ortenburg owned Gottschee from the late 1200s until 1420. They colonized the wilderness of Gottschee and established its first laws. Their laws were designed to attract colonists. The subjects still had to pay taxes and render tithes of their produce as was the custom in the Middle Ages, but overall the laws established by the Ortenburgs were quite a bit more generous with subjects' rights than prevailed in the rest of Europe. The *Waldordnung* (Forest Law) of 1406 is a classic example of the Ortenburg policies of fairness. They were good masters.

When the Ortenburgs died out in 1420, their domains were inherited by the powerful House of Cilli. The Counts of Cilli owned Gottschee from 1420 to 1456. They spent most of their time and money improving the defenses of the domain -- which was a frontier domain of the Duchy of Carniola and the Holy Roman Empire. The enormous and new military threat came from the expanding Ottoman Turkish empire that had conquered the Balkans up to the very borders of Carniola. To meet this threat, the Cilli lords built Friedrichstein Castle above the town of Gottschee. They fortified the town of Gottschee and the villages of Rieg and Ossinitz, which were important parishes along crit-

ical invasion routes into Gottschee and the entire duchy. The Cillis also renovated and expanded the ancient Roman *castellum* at Kostel, Grafenwarth Castle, and the large fortress at Reifnitz (Ribnice), north of Gottschee.

Widmer found no additional documentary information about the House of Cilli's 36 year rule in Gottschee. One reference in a document of a century later says the Cillis instituted the duty of the *Saumfahrt*. Under this duty, certain villagers were required to provide horses (or oxen) and wagons to transport grain and other items for a specified number of days each year. It is believed that the *Saumfahrt* was instituted

because of the military necessity to transport grain and war materials to imperial soldiers on the Croatian frontier. In later years, Gottscheer subjects were certainly drafted for that purpose. When the last Count of Cilli was buried, reports indicate there was great mourning among the citizens of Cilli, and the other domains owned by their house. The overall assessment is that they were

good masters, especially in their care for military security against a terrible new threat, the Turks.

By prior agreement, the Habsburgs inherited the domain of Gottschee, and became its direct owners in 1456. The Habsburgs emerged from an obscure domain in Switzerland, and through good politics and clever marriages, by that year had become the Archdukes of Austria, Dukes of Carinthia, Styria, and Carniola, Counts of Tyrol, and sovereigns of other realms. They were frequently elected as Holy Roman Emperors.



Photo courtesy of Ted Meditz, Neuberg by Tschermoschnitz, now Germany, via Sophia Stalzer Wyant.

The Good Masters of Gottschee (continued)

From 1456 to 1505, a period of 49 years, the Habsburgs directly managed their domain at Gottschee through appointed stewards, bailiffs, and magistrates. Widmer quotes many of the documents appointing these officials. In each, the archduke stipulates that the appointee is to "take care not to demand from our people and subjects who belong to our said domain more than the customary profits, rent, taxes, service, or labor, and not to make unreasonable demands contrary to the old tradition."

As reported in the last edition of *The Gottschee Tree* journal, the Habsburgs raised Gottschee to a city and bestowed on it, and the six miles of surrounding territory, the special municipal privileges of the *Burgfrieden*. They appointed magistrates and sheriffs to maintain law and order in Gottschee's three manorial districts: *Upper Gottschee*, *Lower Gottschee*, and *Rieg*. In 1468, Emperor Friedrich III corrected a shortage in the supply of wine to Gottschee's taverns by directing his steward at the neighboring domain of Möttling (Metlika) who had been hoarding the wine and exporting it abroad, "to collect for us all the wine produced in the Mettling, which we are informed you have prohibited from being sold ... and [we] 'earnestly recommend' that each year you divide the wine into three portions of which one third is to be given to the magistrate, council, and citizens of Mettling; the second third to our stewards in Gottschee and Rieg; and the last third to our bailiffs or stewards at Reiffnitz, Zobelsberg, and Ortenegg ... [and to receive a wholesale price of] 40 Pfennigs a pail. We have herewith commanded them to take from you annually such a third of the wine, and offer it for sale at the aforesaid destinations to our people and subjects favored [licensed] by our administration in taverns and elsewhere, and to send you the money annually on St. George's Day."

To insure complete compliance, the archduke wrote to his stewards on the three manors of Gottschee the instruction that "the wine is to be presented to our people and subjects favored by our administration in taverns, and at other destinations where it can be served from taps and sold." Wine was an essential commodity in

those days.

Again in 1468, the archduke directed Balthasar Wagen, the steward at Rieg and Pölland, to take 500 gulden that had been collected in taxes and pay the Gottscheers and Pöllanders who had been drafted to construct the fortress at Trieste and served as militia there. On the same day, Hans Aprech, the steward at Gottschee, was directed to send Wagen 200 gulden for the same purpose.

In 1471, Gottschee was raised to the status of city, and thereby got its own city council and judge. The city then no longer fell under the jurisdiction of the district magistrate who held court at Friedrichstein Castle above the town of Gottschee. When the position of magistrate became vacant, the city council asked the Emperor if they could act as district magistrate for the rural manors. The Emperor gave them his permission for two years. He directed the customary pledge that they would not burden the subjects with additional tithes or taxes – to which they agreed in writing.

The Emperor was legitimately concerned about not adding to the burden of the subjects by his appointed administrators. Magistrates, bailiffs, and stewards did not receive salaries. They "leased" their employment; that is, they had to pay the sovereign an agreed annual fee. They extracted the fee, and probably a good percentage above it, for their salaries: the magistrate by imposing and collecting court fines; the stewards by collecting taxes in the form of goods and produce from their manoral districts, which the subjects were obliged to hand over. Hence, the Emperor was concerned about honest assessments and keen on controlling greed.

In 1476, while at Neustadt (Rudolfswert) on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the Emperor permitted the three Petritz brothers from Gottschee "to mine iron ore in Grafenwarth and Ossiunitz ... to build hammers, ironworks, and coal bins ... and to fortify the same, and to use stone and materials from public forests without tax." The Emperor did, however, "reserve for us and our successors the right to charge tolls and taxes on

the iron and houses [factory buildings].”

On Ascension Day 1478, the Emperor published a decree exempting the citizens of the manor of Rieg from a year's taxes. He sent the decree along with a nice letter to his "loyal subject" the steward Balthasar Wagen, to "inform you that we have exempted our people and subjects of our manor at Riegk, who belong to your jurisdiction, from a year's taxes because of the damages which they have suffered in the course of the year, and we earnestly command you to observe this exemption." The damages mentioned appear to have been caused by an attack of the Turkish army in the vicinity of Kostel and Rieg.

As we can see from these few examples, the Habsburg lords of Gottschee took an active and personal interest in the management of their little domain of Gottschee. Not only did they seek to protect the common man against unscrupulous local officials, they also sought the economic betterment of the community by regulating the supply of wine in taverns; by seeing that those who provided work for government projects were paid promptly; that industry was fostered; and that mercy, in the form of tax relief, was given when needed. These are positive indications of good, honest government and public responsibility. *The Habsburgs, too, were good masters.*

Overall, in the first 200 years of its existence, Gottschee was well governed. After 1507, however, the Habsburgs quit governing with direct-reporting stewards and began leasing the entire domain to lesser nobles in return for a negotiated annual fee. The leaseholding lords were thereby permitted to act as landlords. By 1515, the subjects of Gottschee were in full revolt against their new masters who had imposed new taxes and labor duties which were contrary to their ancient privileges. The next 100 years were years of turmoil, as we shall read in subsequent issues of the journal.■

by Fred Muschler

My maternal grandparents, Josef and Josefa Jonke of Schalkendorf #38 (Salka vas), had seven children. The three oldest children, Josef, Sophie, and Mary, were in the United States when the photograph (see below) was taken in 1908. Eventually, all seven children immigrated to the United States. All lived to be at least 85 years old, with one living to 101 years. The last of the Jonke children to die was Franziska in 1998, at the age of 96.

Josef and Josefa Jonke never left Gottschee, and died several years after World War II. They were buried in the cemetery at Corpus Christi (Mooswald). This cemetery was removed about 10 years ago, but the headstone of my grandparents' grave was recessed into the wall of the church.■



From left to right, front row: Franziska (Fannie) b.1902, Rudolf (b.1904), mother Josefa Jonke (b.1861), Anna (b.1899). Back row: Karolina (b.1895), and father Josef Jonke (b.1864). Photo courtesy of Fred Muschler.

Photographs of the City of Gottschee in 1943

by Fred (Fritz) Falkner

The photographs, courtesy of Fred Falkner, "show a largely deserted City of Gottschee during the fighting that took place here from October 1943 to May 1945 between the German Wehrmacht and Tito's Partisans. During that time the city was also repeatedly bombed by the Allies." (from 1980 Festbuch by Ludwig Kren)

Following are corrections of names spelled incorrectly in the last issue. The editor regrets the errors.

- 3. Alex Verderber (Rauchfangkehrer/chimney sweep)
- 10. Rancinger (Hemden/shirt store)
- 20. Stonitsch (Uhrmacher/watchmaker)
- 38. Engele (Glasgeschäft/glazier)
- 44. Brücke bei der Kirche (bridge over the Rinse by the church)
- 51. Tuzcansky (Hut Geschäft/hat store)
- 61. Fachschule (Trade School)
- 63. Hiris (Bäckerei/bakery)
- 71. Verderber (Bier Handlung/beer distributor)



- 11. Domian (Kaffeehaus/coffeehouse)
- 12. Höningmann (Fleischhauer/butcher)
- 13. Macher (Geschäft/hardware store)
- 36. Schloss Gottschee (Castle Gottschee)
- 26. Koritnik



- 45. Brücke zum Friedhof (bridge to the cemetery)
- 51. Tuzcansky (Hut Geschäft/hat store)
- 52. Herbst (Friseur/barber)



- 53. Hoffmann
- 54. ?
- 55. ?
- 56. Apotheke (pharmacy)
- 57. ?
- 58. Schleimer (Gasthaus/Restaurant)



36. Schloss Gottschee (Castle Gottschee)
 46. Bruno Schadinger Familie (2nd floor apartment in the castle)
 49. Jail



38. Engele (Glasgeschäft/Glazier)



5. Peter Petsche (Kaufhaus/store)
 6. Schleimer
 7. Mathias Rom (Kaufhaus/dry goods store)
 44. Brücke bei der Kirche (bridge over the Rinse river by the church)

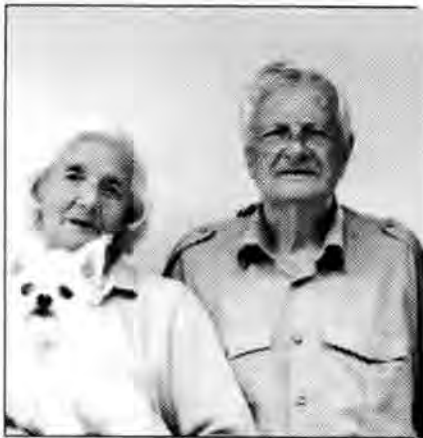


23. Geschäft/store

The Prince's Last Castle

by Max Mische

Ja ich bin Karl Auersperg (Yes, I am Karl Auersperg). These words, delivered in a self-assured voice, came from a tall, dignified figure in the garden as he half-turned to answer my inquiry. *Und wer sind Sie?* (And who are you?) I realized at once that this was Prince Karl Auersperg (b. 1915), although much older than in earlier photographs, but still very recognizable and handsome. I told him my name and that I had come from California and was visiting the Alps on the way to Slovenia. I hastened to add that my parents had come from the village of Altlag in Gottschee (now Kočevje). He mused for a moment, then asked me if I didn't write for the *Gottscheer Zeitung*. I said that I occasionally submitted articles, pleased at the recognition. This seemed to have a tonic effect on Prince Karl who had appeared startled by the four intruders standing in his doorway: myself, wife Gladys, cousin Wolfgang Gertschmann (with whom we drove to the Austrian Tyrol from Frankfurt), and our daughter Francesca. As we lingered there for an awkward moment, the Prince's wife Maria emerged from the house to greet us with her poodle. Both individuals seemed quite tall, dignified, and unexpectedly friendly.



Prince Karl Auersperg and his wife Maria outside of their house in the Tyrol.

Photo courtesy of Max Mische.

Earlier, we had asked local villagers if they knew whether a Karl Auersperg lived nearby. To our delight, they seemed familiar with his name and told us that he resided in a new house he had just built on a hilltop overlooking the village, along with the majestic Wilder Kaiser alp in the distance. I had made a previous attempt

at contacting Karl Auersperg to request an interview. But unfortunately my letter found its way to another Auersperg living in Schloss Wald outside of Vienna, a distant relation. It was Herbert Fink (b. Neulag), our host in Kramsach in the Tyrol, who first told me where Karl Adolf Auersperg lived. We had guessed that it might be his summer home. But I later realized that this was his final home, his *last castle*.

The Prince and his wife graciously invited us inside. In the entry hall, one immediately saw three impressive portraits of the Prince's noble ancestors. He pointed to one of the portraits saying, "This is Count Wolf Engelbrecht von Auersperg, the first ruler of Gottschee" (1641). Then he identified the other portraits, one of which was of the Count of Turjak (Auersperg) who defeated the Turks in a famous battle in 1593. As Prince Karl stood amid his forebears, he said proudly, "You must know that the Auerspergs were already a power in Europe from the year 1000!" I was later told in Ljubljana by Tone Ferenc, the expert in Slovenia on German minorities across Europe, that the Auerspergs had been the richest family in Eastern Europe up to WWI. The Prince's grandfather, also a Karl (b. 1859), who died suddenly in 1927, was the last official ruler, or duke of Gottschee. It was after this, and the death of his own father in 1927, that young Prince Karl became the Fürst of Gottschee.



Prince Karl in front of a portrait of an early Auersperg ancestor. *Photo courtesy of Max Mische.*

The Prince's Last Castle (*continued*)

We were then led into the living room with its large bay windows looking out to the beautiful mountains in the distance, creating a wonderful sense of space. I was anxious to ask a few impromptu questions, given that in a couple of days I would be visiting the former Gottschee. With the Kosovo conflict just ending, reminding one of the plight of the Gottscheers at the end of WWII when they were driven out of Slovenia, I asked what our host thought about the resettlement of the Gottscheers. He answered: "I was against it. I even took a delegation with me to Berlin to persuade the German authorities not to give Gottschee to the Italians, and not to resettle the Gottscheers away from their homeland. But I was unsuccessful." At the time, many Gottscheers had misgivings about resettling and also resented the Italian occupation. He went on to say that he personally did not want to leave Gottschee, that "I tried to remain (in the castle) until the very end, until the spring of 1942. But when the fighting between the Germans and Partisans intensified, it was no longer safe and I had to flee. *I lost everything.*" As he uttered that last sentence, one could see he had suffered a deep loss from which, like many Gottscheers, he has never recovered. One must remember that the Auerspergs owned two castles in Slovenia: Castle Gottschee in the City of Gottschee and Castle Ainöd (in Soteska) on the border of Gottschee. Prince Karl was also having a third castle built in the Hornwald forest (called the "four-cornered hat") before the war broke out.

Then I asked Prince Karl what it was he did during the war, he immediately responded: "I was with the Cossacks." This struck me as odd, since I was not aware that any Cossacks were in the war. He went on to say that over 200,000 Cossacks had deserted the Russian army and went to fight against the Communists (Stalin's Red Army). It appears that Prince Karl served in the German army and fought on the Russian front. After the war, he lived for a short time with his family, his wife (formerly the princess of Hungary) and two sons, in Austria in his Castle Losensteinleithen. I asked if he remembered Fritz Falkner, his chauffeur, and his wife Josephine (Poje), whom I had interviewed and who told me much about the Prince and his family.

He smiled warmly at the mention of their names and said he recalled them quite well. "You know that after the war I went to live in Uruguay, and that I had a motorcycle accident and my wife was killed?" I was aware of this, I said, noting to myself this second tragedy that had befallen him.

He then told us bitterly how the Auersperg count at Turjak, not being as lucky as himself, was captured, then tortured and killed by the Partisans; and that his wife was also killed in a Partisan concentration camp. He went on to relate many of the atrocities that were committed by Tito and his Communists the mass killings in the Hornwald (the forest in Gottschee). We sat in pained, but assenting silence, as the wartime atrocities were recounted.

The Prince then offered us some refreshments. I asked how he had come to live in the Tyrol. He said that in building his new house he had a big struggle with the authorities in getting approval. That he had lived for a long time in Vienna, but now had decided to settle in the Tyrol which was closer to Slovenia. Asked if he goes back to his former Gottschee, he told us he goes there several times a year, mostly for the bears. "But I don't shoot them. I only photograph them. I once shot a bear in the Hornwald and was so sad to see the dead animal that I wept." When asked if he was coming to the Gottscheer celebration planned for late June in Kocevje, he said "Most assuredly." One felt that he was still very much tied to his former life in Gottschee, and to the Gottscheers with whose fate he obviously feels a deep affinity.

There were so many questions yet to be asked. But we, after all, were not invited guests, so after our short visit we took our leave. As we stood outside with the Prince and his wife saying our final good-byes, knowing what he lived through both in Gottschee and after the war, one could not help but sense the homage that is his due. After all, he stands at the end of the line Auerspergs who were good rulers of Gottschee, taking care to preserve Gottscheers' rights and to improve their lives. ■

Letter from Lienfeld (Livold)

translated by Anna Tushar

The January 5, 1938 letter appeared in the December 1998 issue of *Bakh-Pot*, newsletter of the Gottscheer clubs in Slovenia. (Editor's Note)

My dear mother,

Mici (Mary) and Jozica (Josie) arrived home safely. They did not catch cold. We are all in good health, but we do have very cold weather - 21 degrees below zero.

Just as we were discussing to purchase the Mohar's farm if the price was right, there is another opportunity in Lienfeld (Livold). There is a widower, 64 years old, all alone, and can't work by himself. He has decided to sell. The house is very nice and made of stone by the main road. It also has a wood shed, a place for pigs, and a barn all under one roof. The hay barn is new. The farm has 15 acres, 25 good, tilled grounds, and three forests which have not yet been used. There is one horse worth 2,500 Dinar, one cow, and a lot of hay. All of the farm tools, two wagons, a plow, and all the properties. He is selling for a mere 42,000 Dinars. The buildings are in very good condition. About the land, I took the liberty to get information from a neighbor here, and he told me that the place is surely worth more than the price he is asking. He does have a lot of buyers - Gottschee people - *but the Court does not allow them to buy, only a Slovenian can do so.* He is asking for one-half of the price, the rest he will wait for ten years to be paid.

Therefore, dear mother, please do decide and come here right away this week to see for yourself. You will not be sorry. I can assure you such opportunities are rare. Someone else will take it soon. For once, we could take a loan, then you could sell the woods which will bring some money. Also some of the fields, too. In the spring, they will start to build a new road here to last until late fall. We could take some boarders and thus help to bring in some money. Whatever there could be sold from the farm is very easy, and the nearby town close by, milk and eggs, apples, etc. It will be easier here for my work, also. So mama, come here this Saturday for sure. I will pay for the train ride. I will be grateful to you, and you to me.

Letter from Römergrund

translated by Kate Loschke Prunte

On January 17, 1916, Maria Loschke wrote to her daughter, Marie Kobetitsch (nee Loschke) who lived in Brooklyn. Marie's daughter, Louise Huntly-Playle, had the letter translated. Louise's brother Fred in New York, changed the surname Kobetitsch to Cobet. (Editor's Note)

Römergrund (Remrgründ)

Dearest daughter Minni,

For your birthday I wish you health, much happiness and everything good that God gives and that you still celebrate/experience birthdays happily. Dear Minni, I was very happy today to receive your money - 30 K. (Kronen). Thanks so much. I'll send 10 Kronen to Johann right away and tell him that you sent this money. Already we have had to send him a lot of money for he visits. He must be starving. We are having pathetic and wretched times. I hope God soon gives us peace. You are lucky that you don't have anyone at home.

Dear Minnie, our Loisa came down for a visit. We also spoke of you. She said you had no difficult memories of your visit because of your money. Also I want you to know that Loisi Rom is going to America shortly and still --- Dear Minni, how often I think of you since your nice visit home... and Johann. Now I am alone [?] and have bad times on top of it. Minni, if only I could speak personally with you a little while, I'd have so much to say.

Cordial greetings and kisses,

Your Mother

Greetings from --- and Loisi Rom and Rudolf from Turn. I wrote on 4 January. Did you receive it? Write back soon. ■

Letter from Lienfeld (continued)

Such opportunities are rare. We will have enough logs to sell besides our use, and the land also we can give to lease if we cannot do it ourselves. Take with you 2000 dinars for the down payment, to make sure no one else will buy it. Therefore, we will have the house and property.

Greetings from Lojze (Louis) and Mici (Mary).

Stalzer Family of Obermösel #37

by Theodore (Ted) R. Stalzer

My Gottscheer connection is my father, Theodore Stalzer, who was born in Obermösel (Gornji mozelj) #37 in 1871. There was confusion about his birth date. When he applied for citizenship papers, the Notary of Gottschee sent the date 30 October 1872. But my father knew he was born in 1871. He got the date changed. Later, when I was looking at the Gottschee records (LDS - Mormon microfilm records), I solved the mystery. The old priest in Gottschee in 1871 who recorded the birth date, wrote with a very shaky hand. When he tried to write the last "one," it looked like a "two." I verified the 1871 date in at least two places in the Family Records of Mösel parish.

My Grandfather, Thomas Stalzer and His Family

My Stalzer line goes back to Nesselstal (Koprivnik) with Leonhard Stalzer. One of his sons was Jacob Stalzer, who was the father of Thomas Stalzer, my grandfather. Other names in the direct line include Springer, Hutter, Stampfl, Perz, Lackner, and Montel.

My father's ancestral home was Obermösel #37, which was called *Palschaus*. It had seen several generations of Springers living in the house before the Stalzars. Maria Springer, Jacob's wife, was born in *Palschaus*. She lived her whole life in this house. She lived there with her son, Thomas Stalzer, and helped raise his children. In fact, she outlived Thomas by seven years.

Thomas Stalzer had three wives and 13 children. Two children by the first wife did not survive. Five of his children - Theodore, Johann, Reinhold, Mathilde, and Max - immigrated to the United States. Initially, they were all living in Kansas City.

There were two very curious intermarriages with the wives of Thomas and three of his daughters. Maria Jonke, was the second wife of Thomas. Maria was also the sister of Joseph G. Jonke, who was the second husband of Thomas's daughter, Marie Stalzer. Maria was also the sister of Johann Jonke who was the husband of Thomas' daughter Helene Stalzar.

Obermösel #37, *Palschaus*, was probably the largest of the 96 houses in the village. It was described as a villa of 14 rooms. The largest room was the kitchen which had a large table, a hearth, and a metal coal stove which was put together with bolts and nuts. Above the kitchen was a large loft where there was a granary which held many bushels of wheat, dried plums, apples, pears, etc., Also the coal stove was dismantled and stored there in the summer.

Below the kitchen was a large cellar. The windows had steel shutters with iron cross bars. The windows were of one-inch steel. The cellar was arched over with bricks which rested on steel beams.

In the cellar were large barrels which held several hundred gallons of homemade wine. Also there were a number of big tanks of sourkraut, beets, and carrots. The potato bin had 50 to 75 bushels in the winter. Outside, there were several barns and stables for 10 horses, and many cows, chickens, and pigs. There was a large five acre orchard with more than a 100 fruit trees, apple, pear, and plum. Thomas was an outstanding grafter of fruit trees. There was a large grape arbor, more than 100 years old, from which wine was made each year. There were large wheat fields, a large vegetable garden, and a large forest of trees. Thomas harvested trees from this forest for his lumber business. Several farm helpers lived on the property.

The house was on the main street which went up a hill to Gottschee City, about six miles away. Across the road was Obermösal #35, the ancestral Thaler home, which was called *Thurlarsch*, where Edith Herold was born. Nearby was Obermösal #11, called *Locknerisch Haus*. This was the ancestral Lackner home, and Thomas's daughter, Marie Stalzer, lived there after she married Peter Lackner.

Thomas founded a business as a *Stock Lieferant*, a wholesale dealer in natural woodstock. Apparently, Thomas harvested wood stock from his forest, and cut the timber into rough wood forms. A common use of the forms was to make canes for gentlemen. This business was very

Stalzer Family of Obermösel #37 (continued)

successful and prosperous for Thomas. He was able to expand his business and had clients all over Europe. Thomas took many business trips, especially to Croatia. Thomas spoke German, Slavic, and Croatian.

Thomas donated some of his land to a cemetery for the church in the village, with special privileges for his family members. Pastor Andrejah blessed the site on May 10, 1888. Thomas himself was the first to be buried there on November 30, 1888.

Thomas also financed repairs to widen some roadways in Obermösel. The work included dynamiting, acquisition of adjacent land, and building a stone security wall. Thomas was a very religious man with a strong personality. He was highly admired and respected in the village and beyond.

The years 1887 and 1888 were very eventful years for Thomas Stalzer and his family. In the summer of 1887, his son Theodore returned from Vienna University, where he had been a student for two years. It is believed he did not complete the work for his Ph.D. Thomas had hoped that Theodore would take over his business, since Thomas knew his health was failing. But Theodore wanted to go to America, so Thomas reluctantly agreed. Theodore left Obermösel about October 17, 1887 with three other local boys. He arrived at the Port of New York City on November 1, 1887, after a six day voyage on the S.S. Werra from Bremen. Thomas who was in poor health from stomach ulcers, was very sad that his son had left for America while he was on a business trip, so he could not tell his son "good-bye."

In September 1888, Thomas' daughter, Christine married Johann Röthel of Koflern #19, and they left to live in Graz, where Johann had a teaching position.

On November 29, 1888, Thomas Stalzer signed his will. He gave each of his children 800 Florin (or Gulden). Strangely, his son Reinhold was not mentioned in the will. The last child, Josefa, was born after Thomas's death. This child was not

mentioned in the will either. As told by my father, herein is the story. In mid-1888, Theodore had written his father to have him send a trunk of books to America. Thomas had been saving these books in the loft for Theodore. But while Thomas was on a business trip, his third wife, Maria, had found the books in the loft, and had sold them to a Dr. Perz. When Thomas returned and found the books gone, he flew into such a rage, that Maria fled to a neighbor's house for refuge. From that time, until his death, Thomas did not see much of Maria, and he never knew she was pregnant with his 13th child. One day after signing his will, Thomas Stalzer died on 30 November 1888, at the age of 51. ■

Wives and Children of Thomas Stalzer (1837-1888)

1st wife: Maria Magdalena Hutter (1844-1880)

- Children:
1. Marie Stalzer (1865-1913)
m. (1) Peter Lackner,
(2) Josef Jonke
 2. Helen Stalzer (1866-1933)
m. Johann Jonke
 3. Anton Stalzer (1869-1869)
 4. Christine Stalzer (1870-1937)
m. Johann Rothel
 5. Theodore Stalzer (1871-1968)
m. Jessie Wadley
 6. Johann Stalzer (1873-1955)
m. Rosalia Ostermann
 7. Francisca Stalzer (1875-1875)
 8. Reinhold Stalzer (1877-1918)
m. Florianna
 9. Mathilde Stalzer (1878-1968)
m. John Robben
 10. Julianne Stalzer (1879-1970)
m. (1) Mathias Kostner
(2) Alois Sterbenz

2nd wife: Maria Jonke (1856-1885)

- Child: 11. Heinrich Stalzer (1882-1904)

3rd wife: Maria Kostner (1849-1895)

- Children: 12. Max Stalzer (1886-1910))
13. Josefa Stalzer(1889-?))
m. Richard Sparowitz

Reunion in Gottschee

by Elizabeth Nick

Forty GHGA members attended the festivities of the Gottscheer Reunion in Gottschee, June 1999, which included the dedication of the chapel in Drandul (Travi dol), the reunion in Grafenfeld (Dolga vas) and the consecration of the new church in Rieg (Kočevska reka). One of the speakers at the event was Norbert Lackner, president of the Gottscheer Relief Association, Toronto, Canada.

Speech by Norbert Lackner, June 19, 1999

"Honored representatives of the Slovenian government, the mayor of the city of Gottschee, representatives of the Gottscheer organizations from Austria, Germany, Slovenia, overseas, and all participants at the Treffen, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to thank the Slovenian government and especially his honor, the mayor of Gottschee, who assisted the old Gottscheer community in Slovenia, to organize this reunion of the Gottscheers, from all over the world, with their former neighbors, the Slovenes.

I think, today, we are all happy, to be again in your homeland. A Slovenian poet once said: "Every bird loves his nest." Is it therefore not proper that a human being loves the land of his birth? More than half a century ago, many of us were forced to leave this land of our forefathers. In spite of this long time, since our departure, our hearts still beat for our Gottscheerland. Often our thoughts are travelling back to the time of our youth.

We should never forget the common history of over 600 years, when the Gottscheers and Slovenes were living together in harmony. Together they overcame the good and bad times. Our ancestors drenched this land with their sweat and blood, therefore we remember them with honor. When we came to this world, nobody could choose his nationality. God alone made the choice for us. We are all children of God and our highest commandment should be to live together in peace, like our ancestors did. With this reunion, a good start has been made. May God grant us many more meetings."



Hans Jaklitsch, past president of Altsiedler Gottscheer Verein, Pöllandl, and Erik Krisch, president of the Peter Kosler Gottscheer Verein, Ljubljana, speaking during the ceremonies in Grafenfeld, June 19, 1999. These two men, plus August Gril, Maridi Tscherne (Altsag), and Professor Doris Debenjak (Ljubljana) were the co-organizers of the Welcome Home, Gottscheer Reunion, June 19-20, 1999.



August Gril, president of the Altsiedler Gottscheer Verein, Pöllandl, speaking during the ceremonies at the dedication of the renovated chapel in Drandul (Travi dol), June 20, 1999.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2000 GHGA ANNUAL MEETING

The Gottscheer Heritage and Genealogy Association (GHGA) will hold its next annual meeting from June 23-25 in Vancouver, B.C. Canada. The meetings, workshops, and historical/genealogical presentations will be held at the Granville Island Hotel, 1253 Johnston Street, Vancouver, B.C. Canada. The phone number of the hotel: 604-683-7373 or toll free, 1-800-663-1840.

HENRY "HANK" SPREITZER

Henry Spreitzer, charter member #8 and one of the first directors of GHGA, died August 7, 1999 at the age of 85. Hank was one of 20 subscribers to *The Gottschee Tree* in 1992, who attended a western reunion of Gottscheers in Salt Lake City, where the group decided to form the Gottscheer Heritage and Genealogy Association. The following year in Frisco, Colorado, Hank was elected as one of three directors.

Hank attended all the GHGA annual meetings. He always drove to the meetings, and was active in all the proceedings. Hank was a member of the EOUV in Cleveland, and he volunteered to sell GHGA publications at the annual Gottscheer Treffen in Cleveland. Thus began the annual trek to the yearly Treffen. Hank will be especially remembered for his friendship and support of GHGA. He will be missed.

CORRECTIONS

The following errors occurred in the June 1999 issue of *The Gottschee Tree*. The editor regrets the errors.

Page 14: The name of the GHGA member is Hedy Stoy, not Helen Stoy.

Page 14: In the last paragraph, Anna was the ninth child, not the eighth.

Page 7: The date of birth for Josef Matzelle should be 1867, not 1876.

PHOTOGRAPH, OUTSIDE BACK COVER

This photograph of a Gottchee village, perhaps in the parish of Nesselstal, is not known. If anyone recognizes the village, please contact the editor. The photograph is courtesy of Louise Huntly-Playle.

1999 GHGA ANNUAL MEETING

Attendees at the 1999 GHGA annual meeting, held June 23 in St. Louis, Missouri, enjoyed Theodore Stalzer's presentation of the history of his father, Theodore Stalzer, b. 30 October 1871 in Obermösel #37 (Gornji mozelj), and his grandfather, Thomas Stalzer (b. 11 December 1837 in Obermösel #37) and descendants. Mr. Stalzer has researched his family for more than 20 years, contained in two large volumes.

Other workshops were given by Kate Loschke Prunte, *How to Do Gottscheer Genealogy*; and Irene Tramposch Bigot, *How to Obtain an Oral History*. In addition to the annual business meeting, attendees exchanged information, and enjoyed homemade *slivovitz* from Gottschee. The photographs of those who attended the annual meeting are courtesy of Elizabeth Nick and Sophia Stalzer Wyant.



Speakers Theodore (Ted) Stalzer of Missouri and Irene Tramposch Bigot of Colorado.



Sophie Kump Paulet of Illinois, and GHGA Vice-President Sophia Stalzer Wyant of Minnesota, both born in Oberblaschowitz.

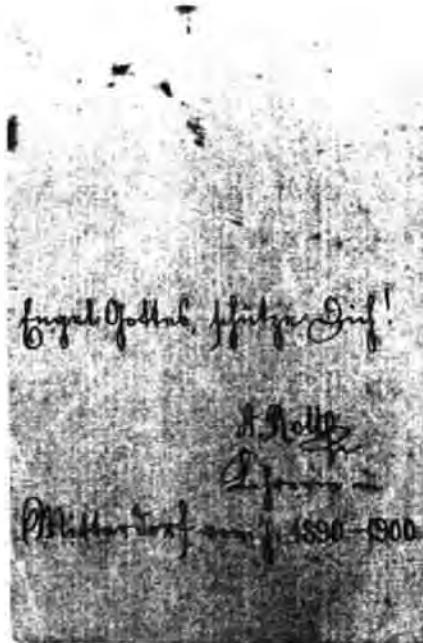


From left to right: John Zekoll of Missouri, Herbert Fritz (Rieg) and Kathy Fritz of Missouri.

Holy Cards from Gottschee

by Peter McWalters

The holy cards belonged to my mother Theresia Höningmann McWalters.



Guarding Angel,
protect you.

A. Rott
Teacher in Mitterdorf
from 1890-1900



Andenken an die erste hl. Communion.



Wer mein Fleisch isst und mein Blut trinkt, der bleibt in Mir und Ich in Ihm. (Joh. 6, 57.)
Brot vom Himmel hast Du uns gegeben, das alle Süßigkeit in sich begreift. *Mlecaja.*

Herrn Hofmeister Theresia Höningmann
hat die erste heilige Communion empfangen in der
Pfarre *St. Michael* am
19. Juli 1899. *gottsch. Pfarre*



„Der Leib unseres Herrn Jesu Christi
bewahre deine Seele zum ewigen Leben!“

So sprach der Dichter, als er die heilige Hostie dar-
reichte und du zum erstenmal seinen Heiland in dein Herz
aufnahmst. Und wie du voll Gutes und Erbarmen bei ihm
eingekniet war, blickt dir von seinem Gnadenköcher ein
reichlichstem Maße mittheilten, dich ewig selig zu machen
— als du ihm gleichsam wie der hl. Johannes an der Wunde
rührest, was hast du ihm da alles versprochen? — Er, der
unendlich getreue Gott, hält gewiß sein Versprechen, während
nur du ihm allezeit getreu bleibst. Hast du aber jene Ver-
sprechen noch am Tage deiner ersten heiligen Communion in
folgende bestimmte Vorsätze und tust dir dieselben später
recht oft ins Gedächtniß zu rufen.

Vorsätze nach der ersten heiligen Communion.

1. Ich will Dir, mein Herr und Heiland, allezeit treu
bleiben in Wort und That, durch jedes Halten meiner
Taufgelübde, durch Beobachtung der zehn Gebote und
der fünf Gebote der heiligen Kirche; ich will als wahrer
katholischer Christ leben und sterben.
2. Ich will, o Jesus, für die ganze Zeit meines
Lebens eine besondere Andacht zu diesem Sacramente
deiner Kirche hegen und so die Unbilden, die Dir von
Menschen und Dämonen zugefügt werden, einzu-
tragen wieder gut machen.
3. Ich will an Sonntagen und Feiertagen niemals aus
eigener Schuld die heilige Messe verpassen, vielmehr,
wenn immer möglich, täglich dem heiligen Messopfer
mit Andacht beiwohnen.
4. Ich will mich, o mein Heiland, monatlich in der
heiligen Communion mit Dir vereinigen und täglich
geistigerweise communiciren.
5. Auch sonst will ich Dich, o Jesus, in allen heiligen
Sacramenten, wenn möglich täglich, besuchen, besonders
aber an Sonntagen und Feiertagen.

Jesum, Vater Gott, Regierer der Herzen, kräftige
in mir diese Vorsätze; heilige Maria, Königin
aller Gnaden, heiliger Schutzengel, alle heiligen
Engel und Auserwählten Gottes, behütet mich bei, daß
ich sie getreulich ausführe! Amen.

Mit Approbation des Bischöflichen Ordinariats Gurk.

Theresia Höningmann
First Holy communion
9 July 1899

