



Old Franklin Township Historical Society Newsletter

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Tracing the Reuschleins in Germany

By Carole Reuschlein Ecker



Sebastian Reuschlein with either his 1st wife Cecelia Schauf (my ancestor) or 2nd wife Theresa Ott (Holler)

The history of my Reuschlein family has never been a mystery to me. Not the American part, anyway. My siblings and I played on the lawn of the Sauk County Courthouse in Baraboo as our parents dug through its records. We knew the names: Heinrich and Elizabetha Vath Reuschlein, Sebastian and Cecelia Schauf Reuschlein, then our grandpa Henry who, with our grandma Christina Paulus Reuschlein, raised a small brood of fine future adults: Dorothy, Florence, Clifford (our dad) and Earl.

We knew that the Reuschleins came from the region of Baden-Württemberg in Germany, that they arrived in Wisconsin before our Civil War,

that their roots ran deep in Plain, where we spent many warm Sundays visiting ancient family members. We saw family pictures going way back in Wisconsin, but none before that. No faces, no places in Germany. In time, I heard the name Tauberbischofsheim, the town where my family originated, and someday I wanted to see it.



Christina Paulus and Henry J. Reuschlein

My husband Mike and I aren't new to genealogy or to travelling to our ancient homelands of England, Ireland and Poland. But we regretted that we were always too rushed, leaving an area too soon. So we planned our trip to Tauberbischofsheim last fall around an efficiency that would yield leisure time, and do it affordably. We rented an apartment for 18 days (often found on VRBO.com or, in our case, through

Tauberbischofsheim's online chamber site), saving hundreds on hotel rooms and restaurants.



Timbered house built in 1582 known as the "Reuschlein House" named for a Reuschlein family that once lived there, located in Distelhausen south of Tauberbischofsheim.

We rented a small GPS-equipped car, cheaper and less stressful to rent before leaving home, to get us everywhere on our own timetable. The upshot: middle-class but spanking-clean accommodations, wonderful landlords who made us part of the family, and, by staying put, freed-up transit time. An off-path stop on Germany's famous Romantic Road, little Tauberbischofsheim is called Tauberö locally and is an acceptable mix of quaint and practical: charming to tourists but useful for residents. Fortress in the old town, shoe stores and hardware stores off the marketplace and industry on the outskirts. The area restaurants are affordable, the vineyards prolific, the breweries pristine. People are small-town friendly. We were quickly and massively exposed to the culture.



Market square in Tauberbischofsheim

Our landlords had us to cookouts and a church fish fry. They gave us apples and potatoes and wine; we made them apple crisp. Next door, Grandma gave us a tour in rousing German of her tiny farm, and we nodded and smiled and gave her cherries from the market. In the grocery store, we did as the locals, grabbing the cheap but good local wine and snapping up the best bread early in the day. Mike took to evening walks, often landing in a pub down the street, where he made a buddy. On the annual Culture Night, we wandered the entire town proper of the exact streets my ancient Reuschlein family used of taking in snippets of concerts in churches, dances in the town hall, drum circles and wine tastings on street corners, and the highlight for us: tea in the warmly lit fortress at long tables of folk-singing neighbors.

Our only prepping for German culture was a short book on customs and some YouTube language tutorials. I memorized maybe 100 words, focusing hard on pronunciation. Mixing and matching words and phrases got us through some rough patches but mostly, a little learning was a dangerous thing and I found myself paddling upstream with jovial fast-talkers, drowning in rolling R's and a-a-achs. (If you're hoping for a real cultural experience in any country of full of laughter and unity and camaraderie of you can't beat trying sincerely to speak the language.)

Other prepping for our trip rested on refreshing my genealogy notes. Dorie Hetzel Danelski and Pat Alt Pulvermacher's book, [The Genealogy and History of the Reuschlein Family from Tauberbischofsheim, Baden-Württemberg, Germany](#), has been essential to my record keeping. Their work is outstanding: comprehensive and sourced. (A side note: this huge, two-volume book is loaded with family names of Plain residents connected with Reuschleins.) I made sure my software entries were updated and downloaded to my tablet photos of pertinent documents I might need. I searched online directories for the Reuschlein surname and, finding two in Tauber, sent letters in English with a ham-handed Google translation in German. I researched German archival resources, contacting

by email genealogists for hire (expensive!), churches and archival libraries. I should have guessed that the libraries, where most protestant records reside, are useless without a translator of Old German. Catholic churches keep their own records, and Tauberø St. Martinø church offered me the help of a volunteer researcher. Irmgard Wehrner-Lippert turned out to be a gifted translator, passionate historian, and just a downright nice person. She brought us ø to my amazement ø photocopies of the baptism, marriage and funeral records of my ancestors and branch relatives, back as far as 1797. She brought us the finest liverwurst from the butcher in the next town over. She brought us what I really came for, though I didnø know it ø my family: three Reuschleins waiting for us in the coffee house in the old town.



Front: Käthe Reuschlein. Middle: Silvia Reuschlein Schlegelmilch, Thomas Schlegelmilch, Carole Reuschlein Ecker. Back: Willi Schlegelmilch, Dorothy (fiancée) and Markus Schlegelmilch, Michael Ecker (my husband).

Sylvia Reuschlein Schlegelmilch and her husband Willi live on the third floor of an extensive house just outside the remains of the old town wall. Their three-season porch overlooks tiled rooftops and the fortress. Sylviaø mother, Käthe Reuschlein, and her aunt, Rita Reuschlein, live in separate apartments in the house. (They are the two Reuschleins I wrote, but their age and the language barrier precluded a response.) Willi is a retired engineer who speaks English well, and Sylvia is a former cook. Their sons are Markus and Thomas, and they have Schlegelmilch family in Minnesota. The Schlegelmilchs were unstoppably gracious. They beamed at meeting

us, eagerly shared family history and old home movies and planted handmade gifts in our hands. They ladled on the courses at table-sagging meals. Sylvia did German food at its best. Sausages, deep-fried apple rings, tangy sauces. Once, dessert was three homemade cakes. We enjoyed it all squeezed around a table on the porch, as doves barnstormed the fortress tower, diving and rolling like Blue Angels.

Sylvia and Willi showed us half-timbered towns and abbeys and castles, as well as family-related churches and cemeteries (where they explained that ancestorsø graves canø be found, due to the custom ø strange to American ways ø of relinquishing plots after a time). They took us to a little Oktoberfest in a nearby village, where we bought crafts at the outdoor market while they stopped all along the way to greet neighbors. There were spinning and sparkling carnival rides set almost right up against the town church. We ompah-ed our way through half-liters of beer at blue-checked picnic tables. øWhy would you go to Munich?ö Willi said. øGermans donø go there. We have real Oktoberfests here.ö

There isnø much Iød change about our trip, itself. But I do have a mental list of what Iød do upfront next time, and it all centers on getting at things sooner. About nine months out, Iød start digging online for an affordable genealogist. Mike did that for our Poland trip, and the genealogist took us to an abandoned estate, a church crumbling into the sea, and some hunting land ø all connected with his family. Iød also use the added time to work harder at finding relatives, asking family in the states for help, looking on Facebook, contacting people mentioned in Dorie and Patø book. Iød take time to load pictures of my family, current and past generations. Sylvia showed me a charcoal portrait of her dad, who looked much like my own dad, Cliff.

What I wouldnø change about our trip, what I am most grateful for, is the hands-on, person-to-person gift that it was. Almost everywhere, we were touched by othersø hospitality, but most notably by our landlords, our researcher and my ønewö family.

Our landlords let us in on the best places to eat, and many nights we'd walk the bike trail to the next town, shortcutting on a cow path to some fine restaurants. We'd return home in blackness, edging across a narrow bridge with the help of only the galaxy above.

Our church researcher, Irmgard, also a tour guide of historic Tauber, led us in a group tour one night. From her, I first felt a kind of misty presence of my family on those streets in the 18th and 19th centuries. I was strolling past their lives like a map in raised relief: their church, their shops, their neighbors' homes, likely their own homes.

Finally, my own dear German family, Sylvia and Willi and their sons, Markus and Thomas, took us

to themselves. We are part of each other's lives now, and it moves me to know how they care. Sylvia, in her halting but beautiful English, made sure I knew. They had taken us to an ancient abbey, and as we wandered the toppling cloisters, she took me aside. In the church, she said, she lit two candles, one for her family and one for mine. She prayed, she said, stumbling through the English, that my family would always be well and that our trip would go well. The longer she spoke, the damper her eyes became, and I was humbled by her goodness and sincerity. We hugged each other, and I felt unworthy of her friendship.

We had found these lovely people, and they were my family. My dad and my grandparents would have been so pleased. I was proud to be the Reuschlein who took the family full circle.



Help!

The United States has a long history of volunteering. Enshrined in the United States Constitution, the right to form voluntary associations has been a treasured aspect of American life since the nation's birth. Alexis de Tocqueville¹ noticed the inclination for Americans to join civic organizations when he traveled the country before the Civil War. By 1944, Arthur Schlesinger² would famously refer to America as a "nation of joiners." But in recent years, the percentage of Americans volunteering has dwindled and is now at its lowest level in a decade.³

Volunteering is beneficial to many people in a number of ways: it helps your community, it allows volunteers to form new friendships, offers a way to learn new skills, provides an outlet to reduce stress, keeps your mind and body active, and in our case, volunteering helps to preserve the history of the Plain and Franklin Township area. There is such an enormous need of volunteers at the society. We need people to help us plan, organize and carry out our fundraising events. We need these events so that we have the funds to purchase the archival material to preserve our donations so they survive for many years into the future. After the archival materials are purchased, the artifacts and documents need to be recorded on the computer and filed away. There is an incredible amount of historical material that has been collected in our short history. If you lack time, we have many small tasks available. Just attending our monthly meetings on the first Thursday of every month (except for January) to help with the society planning would be a welcomed way of volunteering. We welcome new faces and fresh ideas.

Please consider using your time and talents at the society. Even if you think you may not have the skills, you can learn right along with the present active members. As the board members, we have made many stumbles, but are always learning. Come join us! As a team we can make it fun.

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville was a French diplomat, political scientist, and historian.

² Arthur Schlesinger was an American historian, social critic, and public intellectual.

³ <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/10/03/volunteering-america-decline-272675.html>

Some of our recent donations:

- The Family History of Henry Bergman & Ann Heidemannö donated by and written by Neal Brey.
- Rodent trap donated by Gene Schmidt; the trap was found by him in the Frank Schwartz house (corner of Main and St. Luke's Ave) which was demolished to build an apartment building.
- Plain Indians baseball shirt; Garden Gimmicks book; Town & Country Homemakers Club (1953); Gruber Cheese Factory advertising items (factory located in Pleasant Valley): T-shirt, three calendars (1990, 1991&1992), pan scraper, letterhead, and list of patron's monthly milk pound production from 1931 to 1945. All donated by Lois Gruber.
- Two wool riding blankets circa 1920s used by the Hausladen family; family picture; donated by Carol Hausladen Walsh.
- Framed portraits: Michael Bindl, Sr. with first wife Emilia Weishan and 11 children (wooden frame); Michael Bindl, Sr. and second wife Theresa Alt (oval frame); Michael Bindl Sr. and Theresa Alt with his 11 children (wooden frame); donated by Maggie Lomasney.
- Album of pictures (owned by Leslie Gruber) of the Plain golf course being built; on loan from Lois Gruber so the society could make copies.
- "Tour of Duty in Vietnam ó 1969" (Dale M. Nachreiner); donated by Mel Nachreiner.
- Records for the Plain Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Co. of the Town of Franklin 1894-1956; donated by the Hausner family.
- Memorial donation of \$300 given by the Lawrence Kruse family.
- Two 1938 issues of the *Weekly Home News* donated by Jennifer Kraemer.
- George Hetzel's Communion Certificate from 1876; numerous newspaper clippings; donated by Rose Mary Lins Pulvermacher.
- 1950s Hamilton Beach Mixmaster, old bookshelf, 3 fruit boxes, school books, high chair, 4 framed religious pictures, 45 rpm records, numerous games, metal framed picture of Leo Schutz, 1908 Beck-Nachreiner-Carpenter Christmas plate, felt baby shoes, spelling chalkboard, Foxy Toys 1920s. All donated by Harry and Carol Schutz family.
- Mary Alt's 8th grade graduation diploma, Korean War air force winter pants; donated by Pat Ederer.
- St. Luke's wooden folding chairs (2), Korean War photo of Glen "Buzz" Jewel; WWI photo of Glen's father; all donated by Buzz Jewel.

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History is not the past, but a map of the past drawn from a particular point of view to be useful to the modern traveler.

~Henry Glassie

Thanksgiving Day at White Mound

Thanksgiving day was appropriately celebrated at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Bindl, where forty-five of their neighbors and friends gathered and partook of a bountiful turkey dinner and game supper. In the morning all came, the ladies bringing boxes, roasters, pots and pans all filled with good things to eat, while the men and boys brought their guns. The ladies busied themselves with preparing the dinner and the men and boys lined up and with their guns made for the woods. There were fifteen in all and looked something like a wee, little branch broken away from the German army. At 11:30 they returned bringing four squirrels and fifteen rabbits with them. Then came the skinning of the game, in which all the men as well as the women took part. Afterwards all sat down to the table, where a nicely-roasted turkey, furnished by Mrs. Rob Nachreiner, and many other good things too numerous to mention were devoured by the hungry bunch. After dinner the men again shouldered their guns and went back to the woods, soon returning with more game. Being farmers they now had to go home to do the chores, but they didn't forget to come back, as they remembered that the ladies were preparing something good for supper. At 6 o'clock everybody again took their places at the table, this time eating rabbit and squirrel, instead of turkey. After supper cards and many other games were played, **Grandma and Grandpa Dischler** taking part as lively as any of the youngsters. At eleven o'clock more refreshments were served, and as may be imagined no one was very hungry now, yet all wished they could eat more. Near midnight the guests departed for home, feeling that Mr. and Mrs. Bindl certainly are royal entertainers.

Those present were: Grandpa and Grandma Dischler, Joe Bindl and family, H. Bindl and family, John Haas and family, **Robert Nachreiner** and family, Joe Dischler and family, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Nachreiner and daughter Marie, Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Nachreiner, Mr. and Mrs. **Albert Nachreiner**, Mr. and Mrs. Jake Heiser, Jr., Simon Blau, Joe Koswich, Dan and Margaret Nachreiner.

Note that the highlighted names of Rob and Albert Nachreiner were listed as builders of the Franklin Town Hall in Hildegard Thering's book "A History of Plain, Wisconsin" 1982 on page 74. The Franklin Town Hall now houses the museum for the Old Franklin Township Historical Society. In 1899, the Franklin Town Hall was built by



Photo 1921 Wachter Ave, looking south.
Left: Franklin Town Hall.
Right: Reuschlein Store, Pat Walsh

Rob and Albert Nachreiner who received \$84 for their labor. Rob was paid \$1.25 per hour and his brother Albert received 50 cents per hour. This building replaced the wagon shop of Moses Tunstall, wagon maker. The upstairs of the new building was for the use of the Town of Franklin, with a jail and fire station downstairs for the village use. Occupancy of the jail was not very frequent, except during the Great Depression of 1936. The alarm bell in the tower was the only warning system that the village possessed. In the fall of 1979, the alarm bell

was removed by a group of workers and placed upon a concrete base in front of the new fire station.

Also note that the highlighted names of **Grandma and Grandpa Dischler** would be John B. Dischler (1849- 1928) and Anna Maria Ruhland (1852-1928). See photo at right.



Christmas shopping ideas!

List quantity in left column	Price	Shipping & Handling
"May 21st 1918 Cyclone ~ A Path of Destruction."	\$30.00	\$5.00
Wisconsin Kraemers, Part I (200 pages) color only	\$49.95	\$7.00
Kraemer in Amerika (330 pages) color	\$75.00	\$8.00
Kraemer in Amerika (330 pages) black & white	\$45.00	\$8.00
1955 Centennial Parade Video - VHS	\$20.00	\$3.00
1955 Centennial Parade Video - CD	\$20.00	\$3.00
The Ghost Village of White Mound "Billytown"	\$16.00	\$3.00
Index - To Hildegard Thering's Book (Index only)	\$10.00	\$3.00
The History Of St. Luke's Parish	\$12.00	\$3.00
St. Anne's Hill - The Plain Shrine	\$12.00	\$3.00
Genealogies of families that immigrated to Sauk County, Wisconsin, from Bavaria Germany - CD	\$20	\$3.00
Plain, WI 1937 Movie Plus Vintage Still Photos - Movie DVD	\$10.00	\$3.00
Total including shipping & handling		
Name		
Address		
Make check payable to: Old Franklin Township Historical Society		
Send payment to the following address:		
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Merry Christmas!



The officers and board members would like to wish you a joyous holiday season.

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