



Old Franklin Township Historical Society Newsletter

September 2022 - Volume 15, Issue 3

Bavaria-Plain Exchange Visits - Groups and Individuals

By Ken Kraemer & Debbie Blau



Marker in Waldmünchen shows the distance to Plain as 7641 kilometers

Since at least 1929, there have been visits of individuals from the Plain area to the Oberpfalz region of Bavaria to meet relatives, search for roots, or engage in social and cultural visits. Similarly, individuals from the Waldmünchen area have visited in Plain.

Beginning in 1993, group exchanges between Waldmünchen and Plain area residents involved gatherings of as large as 30 to 40 people.

How did the large group exchanges begin? It was in 1989-1990 when Paul Weiss, son of Joan Ringelstetter and Robert Weiss, visited the Waldmünchen area while he was a student at Stuttgart. Paul recalled, "I understand [my] early visit may have been a trigger for our Bavarian friends to begin visiting Plain." Christa Senft of Waldmünchen agreed: "It was the book, *A History of Plain*, [by Hildegard Thering in 1982] which he [Paul] had given to Hans Stautner. Hans had taken it to our English course, and this started the whole thing!" The exchanges would not have been as successful without the help of Christa Senft who patiently translated German and English conversations, speeches, newspaper stories, and letters. Following are stories of visits of individuals and of larger groups.

Aug-Nov 1929: Barbara (Pfeiffer) and George Hetzel went by ship on a 3-month tour of Europe with a stop in their native villages in Bavaria to visit friends and relatives. At Ast, they ordered a "Mutter Gottes von Ast" painting which was later mailed to them in January 1930. The painting was donated to St. Anne's Chapel in Plain where it can still be seen today. The painting has special significance to visitors from Ast. The *Weekly Home News* had a short story about their trip on Sept. 5, 1929. Debbie Blau wrote a story in May 2011, "Mutter Gottes von Ast - Our Lady of Ast: The painting which traveled from Ast (Bavaria, Germany) to Plain (Wisconsin)" (PDF Version 2).



Barbara Pfeiffer and Georg Hetzel are in the middle with their arms intertwined. The others are unidentified. 1929

1950: Ed and Gisella (Frank) Kraemer visited Irlach. With Fr. Vollath, they searched for #27 Irlach but were unable to locate the former home of Paul Kraemer.

February 1982: Ken Kraemer went with Heinrich and Karla Reinermann from Speyer, Germany, to the Oberpfalz region of Bavaria to search for house #27 in Irlach - the former home of Paul Kraemer and Walburga Stangl. They found the home then owned by Robert and Maria Blattmeier at house #55 in Irlach. They returned multiple times to find the former homes of other

ancestors in the villages of Tiefenbach, Altenschneeberg, Treffelstein, Schömersdorf, and Untergrafenried. In May of 1982, Robert Wilson also found the former Kraemer home and took the iconic photo of the home for Ann (Kraemer) Neviaser.



L to R: Ken Kraemer, Maria and Robert Blattmeier at the former home of Paul & Walburga Kraemer in Irlach, 1982

May-June 1982: Dean and Beatrice (Ringelstetter) Blau and Debbie Blau went to Bavaria to see ancestor villages such as Gleissenberg (Blau), Tiefenbach & Altenschneeberg (Ringelstetter), Irlach (Pfeiffer & Vogl), Schömersdorf (Lehner), and Steinlohe (Huber). Michael Blau of Gleissenberg toured them around. They also met with Ringelstetter relatives in Munich. After this began an exchange of visits with Michael Blau and Anni Ringelstetter both visiting Wisconsin in 3 different years. During these visits in Wisconsin, there were large reunions and parties held for Mike and Anni.



Beatrice and Debbie Blau with Anna Ringelstetter Wagner (right) in Tiefenbach, May 24, 1982

Oct 1984: Rev. Frank Brickl (born at Plain) and Secretary Edith Alt went to Waldmünchen to see the Daniel Brückl tavern. They both spoke very good German. They also visited the Laubmeier family at Steinlohe. Stories of their trip were published in the *Chamer Zeitung* and *Bayerwald Echo*. Unfortunately, the newspaper gave his name as Rev. Josef Brickl.



Stolz verweist Pfarrer Josef Brickl an der Erinnerungstafel für Daniel Brückl beim Schmidbräu darauf, daß dieser sein „grandfather“ war. Aufn.: Gaggermeier

1980s: Leo and Erna (Liegel) Ringelstetter visited the Ringelstetters in Bavaria including a visit to Irlach.

1992: Edith Alt Hochstetter, Rev. Frank Brickl, Roberta "Bobbie" (Alt) Hansen, and Michael Hansen met in Waldmünchen to get acquainted with people who wanted to visit Plain in 1993. Edith then organized the 1993 meeting which was led by Rev. Brickl.

June 1993 Plain: The first visit of people from Waldmünchen occurred in 1993 when 37 Bavarians made a three-day visit to Plain as part of a broader tour of America. They stayed in the homes of families in Plain, toured St. Luke Catholic Church, the old St. Luke Cemetery where many Bavarian immigrants are buried, and St. Anne Shrine. The group enjoyed a potluck lunch with around 150 citizens from around the Plain area.



Families host Germans for three days

Gisela Frank Kraemer, age 99 of Plain, played German folk songs on the piano for the guests. Sue Simon Meise

gave a tour of the new St. John Church in Spring Green. The *Chamer Zeitung* of July 23, 1993, published a story with photographs: "Bei Gastfamilien unvergeßliche Tage erlebt" In *Sauk Prairie Star*, July 14, 1994, Doris Litscher Gasser reported on the 1993 trip, "Trip here a dream for Bavarians." Photo by Dan Satran Jr.

October 1994 Waldmünchen: 38 Americans visited Waldmünchen and had a bus tour of area villages such as Herzogau, Treffelstein, and Pemfling.¹ At an evening "Heimatabend" party they were welcomed by Mayor Dieter Aumueller. A Bavarian band in traditional costume played German songs in the main square in front of the city hall building. Ralph Ruhland presented a ceremonial key of the Village of Plain to the mayor. About one-half of the group stayed at the Bayerischer Hof hotel and the others stayed with host families for



the 3-day visit. The group also took a day trip to Prague where they met up with Georg J. Blau of Höchstädt-Donau. He and the group became separated during a bus mix-up which resulted in the story being fondly told that Georg was "lost in Prague." The *Bayerwald Echo* and *Chamer Zeitung* reported on the Americans' itinerary. The following year, the *Home News* had a 3-part series about the trip by author Mary Liegel titled, "German-Americans search for roots" (July 19, 1995; July 26, 1995; August 9, 1995). Mary's story also appeared in the *Sauk Prairie Star* (August 10, 1995), "Trip to Germany is payback for visit here." The local Waldmünchen newspaper published a story titled, "Auswanderer' herzlich willkommen geheissen" from which the above photo was taken by A. Müller.

¹ In 1994, 21 were from Plain: Joe and Lucille Wankerl, Ralph and Anne Ruhland, John and Carolyn Frank, Elsie Haas, Lavern and Luella Haas, Gerald and Kathleen Meise, Delmar and Joan Ring, Francis and Rita Ruhland, Robert and JoAnn Schanke, Caroline Schweiss, Bill and Elvy Weiss. Others were Robert and Anna Cunningham, Charles and Kate Deitelhoff, Raymond and Joyce Grauvogl from Cazenovia; Delores Burmeister, Alois and Mary Liegel from Spring Green; Ann Cunningham and Suzanne Dietl from Madison; Mark Dietl and Sue Kowalke of Baraboo; Hubert Dietl from Wisconsin Dells; Lucille Lindhoff of Reedsburg; Dianne Raczek of Milwaukee; and from Massachusetts were Les and Carol Baker of Westfield.

July 1995 Waldmünchen: 10 Blau family members with roots in Plain traveled to Bavaria. They met with Georg Blau of Höchstädt-Donau who took them on a guided tour of Gleissenberg (Blau ancestor village), Ast, Waldmünchen, and other sights. They enjoyed a typical Bavarian "Wolpertinger" celebration with music and dancing during a "Heimatabend" at the Pongratz Gasthof in Gleissenberg. From Wisconsin were Conrad and Margie Blau and 3 daughters Marnie, Angie, and Karen with husband Petr Kolarsky; Ted Blau and friend Betty Shulka, and from Texas, Alton and Jackie (Blau) Eckhardt.

In Gleissenberg hieß es: „Back to the roots“
Die Familie Blau aus Wisconsin ist zwei Wochen lang auf Spurensuche – 1862 ausgewandert

Gleissenberg. Nicht alltägliche Gäste haben diese Tage der Landgasthof Pongratz in Gleissenberg. Der Familien-Clan der Blau's aus Plain im US-Bundesstaat Wisconsin ist mit zehn Personen seit dem 4. Juli für zwei Wochen auf den Spuren ihrer Vorfahren in Europa. Die Wurzeln der Familie Blau liegen unter anderem in Gleissenberg. Von dort wagten im Jahre 1862 Michael und Barbara Blau zusammen mit ihrem neun Monate alten Sohn Josef den Schritt über den großen Teich ins damals gelobte neue Land, um den besten Lebenshaltung im heimatlichen Gleissenberg zu entfalten. Zusammen mit einer Anzahl weiterer Familien aus dem Altkreis Waldmünchen gründete man die deutsche Niederlassung Plain. Plain ist heute ein kleiner Ort mit 912 meist deutschstämmigen Einwohnern im litigellen, der Heimat sehr ähnlichen Bundesstaat Wisconsin.

Noch heute erinnern eine lange deutsche Tradition und Familiennamen wie Kramer, Gruber, Prem, Lechner, Dindie oder Hausman an die Wurzeln Plain im fernem Bayern. Bis zum 2. Weltkrieg wurde im amerikanischen Plain deutsch gesprochen. Erst die Auswirkungen des Krieges ließen die Muttersprache verschwinden, so daß heute kein Mitglied der Familie Blau in den USA mehr deutsch spricht.

Der ausgewanderte Josef Blau hatte in den Staaten sechs Söhne und zwei Töchter. Ein Pötel von Josef Blau, Don, betrieb vor einigen Jahren mit Hilfe der Verwandtschaft seine

Excerpt of *Chamer Zeitung*, July 12, 1995. The *Bayerwald Echo* of 7/12/1995 had 2 stories: Waldmünchen edition, "Zurück zu den Wurzeln in der Heimat"; in the Furth im Wald edition, "Verwandtschaft von Wisconsin bis Gleissenberg"

July 1996: Georg and Theres "Resi" (Zangl) Ederer and Katrin Senft of Waldmünchen were honored at an open house in Plain. Georg Ederer played a significant role as genealogist in providing Plain people with information about their Bavarian ancestors and villages from research in church books at Regensburg, Waldmünchen, Ast, and Czech Republic. Many of his extensive pedigrees (family trees) and charts are **available on DVD at OFTHS: Genealogies of families that immigrated to Sauk County, Wisconsin, from Bavaria, Germany. The collected works of Georg Ederer, Otto Horz, and Hansjörg Schneider, 2011.**



*Edith Alt, Georg Ederer, Joe Wankerl.
Reception at the Meise home, July 7, 1996*

September 2000: 19 people from the Plain area spent a week in Waldmünchen, staying at the Bayerischen Hof and in private homes. On their first full day, they took a day trip to Prague. Mayor Dieter Aumüller welcomed the group at the city hall in Waldmünchen where they had a city tour. A bus tour of the area included stops at Ast, Tiefenbach, Treffelstein, Irlach, Rötz, Bernried, Stamsried, and Pemfling. A farewell party was held on the last evening. The *Bayerwald Echo* published several stories: "19 Plainer auf den Spuren ihrer Vorfahren," "'Plainer' auf Spuren ihrer Ahnen," "Amerikaner dankten für 'barrel of fun'", "Ein 'Urlaub auf den Bauernhof' und tanzende Plainer"; "238 Reiter pilgerten zum Wallfahrtsort Ast" (issues Sept. 4, 2000; Sept. 9-10, 2000; Sept. 11, 2000)



Zurück zu den Wurzeln: 19 Gäste aus Plain empfang Bürgermeister Aumüller im Waldmünchner Rathaus. Fotos: wik

*American guests and German friends in Sept. 2000.
Back left: Christa Senft, Hansjörg Schneider, Georg Ederer*

May 2005 Plain: 46 people from the Ast and Waldmünchen area visited Plain from May 20-23. Joe Wankerl coordinated the "sister village" meeting and arranged for the Bavarians to stay with host families. Among those from Waldmünchen were Mayor Franz Löffler and wife Andrea; and Resi and Georg Ederer who came with genealogy charts. The group took a pilgrimage up St. Anne's hill carrying a "Mutter Gottes von Ast" candle, and upon reaching the chapel, the Ast church choir sang their special song, "Mutter Gottes von Ast." Stories were in the *Home News*, June 1, 2005: "Sister village choir visits from Bavaria; *Chamer Zeitung* and *Bayerwald Echo*, June 3, 2005: "Amerika-Trip des Aster Kirchenchors mit unvergesslichen Eindrücken." "Eine Amerika-Reise voller Emotionen."



Bavarians and their Plain area friends at the House on the Rock near Spring Green, Wisconsin. May 16, 2005

September 2010 Waldmünchen: 26 people from the Plain area visited Waldmünchen and stayed at the Hotel Bayerischer Hof.² Jürgen Lampatzer gave a tour of the city; a group photo was taken behind the castle where the Trenck der Pandur plays take place every year. At Ast, the Americans were welcomed at Pfarrer-Arnold Platz by County Administrator Franz Löffler, Waldmünchen mayor Josef Brückl, the Ast choir, and area residents. A friendship memorial sign made of glass from the Bavarian Forest was unveiled and

² From Plain area in 2010 were JoAnn (Liegel) Schanke, Robert Schanke, Marian Ruhland Burmester, Dean Burmester, Mary Weidner Liegel, Mary Liegel Muchow, David Kalscheuer, Carol Kalscheuer, Ralph Dischler, Cheryl Rembowicki Dischler, Rev. Raymond Dischler, Ruth Dischler Corrao, Phyllis Hensen Fritchen, Arlene Dischler Hensen, Merle Leifker, Patricia Leifker, Leonard Blau, Janice Kind Blau, Edith Alt Hochstetter, Richard Hochstetter, Linda Ziegler, Mary Frances Bettinger Nachreiner, Agnes Brickl Long, Hermine Schwab Hausner, Gloria Weth, Ruth Ann Craker. From Höchstädt-Donau were Debbie and Georg J. Blau.

blessed by Ast's pastor, Rev. Raimund Arnold. Plain's Rev. Raymond Dischler co-presided at a Mass in the pilgrimage church at Ast and at an outdoor Mass on the day of a horse pilgrimage from Waldmünchen. A welcome party included music, singing, beer, and Bavarian foods. Georg Ederer presented ancestral scrolls. Christa and Willi Senft created a power-point slide presentation showing the beginnings of the Plain-Ast-Waldmünchen friendship, and the Ast choir performed. On the 10th, the group had a long bus ride to see the Passion Play in Oberammergau and returned to their hotel at 3 am! The next day, many in the group went to a wine factory and glass factory in Kötzing. A farewell dinner was held at the hotel in Waldmünchen. Stories of the Americans' visit were published in the *Bayerwald Echo* on Sept. 11 and 13: "US-Bürger aus Plain bei ihren Wurzeln; Amis besuchen Heimat; Bekenntnis des Glaubens zu Pferde"



Outdoor Mass at Ast in 2010. Identification below.³

June 2012 Plain: 45 Germans from the Waldmünchen area visited Plain where they stayed with host families.⁴ A potluck lunch was held at the Village Park where the Ast choir performed (see picture). A program was held at Old St. Luke Cemetery where many Bavarian immigrants are buried. See OFTHS March 2022 issue for details. Translating cemetery speeches to German was Hartmut Weithe, a native German and local Wisconsin resident. Mass was celebrated at St. Luke's

Church by Rev. Mike Resop, Father Joseph Haas, and Germany's Father Ludwig Bumes, with music by the Ast church choir. A beautiful candle inscribed with "Ast-Plain 2012" and the likeness of Mutter Gottes von



Ast had been taken to Plain by the group. The Bavarian's visited St. Anne's Shrine in Plain and Native American sites in the area. Bernhard Ruhland, owner of Weber Max meat market in Waldmünchen, made Fränkische brats at Straka Meats in Plain. A departure program was held in St. Luke's church hall with speeches, food, music, and presentation of gifts including the Jan Biggers friendship painting (details follow). 2012 newspaper coverage included *Home News*, July 4 by JoAnn Liegel Schanke "Visit to Plain from Bavarians detailed"; *Home News* June 13 "Bavarians visit Plain, other spots in area"; *Bayerwald Echo* June 14 "Kirchenchor & Freunde in Amerika" and Aug. 18 "Amerika-Reise nach Plain haltt bei Aster Sängern nach"; and *Chamer Zeitung* June 14 "Eine Traumreise nach USA und Mexiko."

September 2014 Waldmünchen: Tom and Soni Kraemer, Dick and Janis (Kraemer) Marino and Ken Kraemer visited Waldmünchen and various sites associated with the Krämer, Brechtel, Frank, and Stangl families.

³ Following an outdoor Mass in Ast on Sept. 12, 2010, are most of the group of 26 from Wisconsin, including the Waldmünchen mayor and his wife. L to R: Robert Schanke, Linda Ziegler, Merle Leifker, Carol (Rettenmund) Kalscheuer, Patricia Leifker, Mary Weidner Leigel, Mary Bettinger Nachreiner (hidden), JoAnn Liegel Schanke, Mary Liegel Muchow, Phyllis Hensen Fritchen, Father Raymond Dischler, Mrs. Brückl, Ralph Dischler, Mayor Josef Brückl, Leonard Blau, Arlene Dischler Hensen, Ruth Ann Dischler Corrao, Marian Ruhland Burmester, Agnes Brickl Long, Hermine Schwab Hausner, Janice Kind Blau, Dean Burmester, Edith Alt-Hochstetter, Richard Hochstetter. In back: Father Raimund Arnold.

⁴ Among those hosting the Bavarians in 2012 were Robert & Joann Schanke, Ray & Marcia Ring, Fr. Mike Resop, Tom & Sondra Kraemer, Karl Kraemer & Kris Forseth, Ed & Mary Jane Liegel, Dick & Janis Marino, Dolores Liegel, Henry & Judy Ferstl, Darrell & Mary Kraemer, Duane & Gwen Kraemer, Bill & Sue Meise, Jack & Mary Schluter, Joe & Lucille Wankerl, Robert & Ann Cunningham, Dave & Carol Lins, Georg & Rita Brey, Dan & Teresa Lins, Richard & Mary Frances Nachreiner, Gene & Georgene Hausner. The *Home News* reported 38 German participants, but the German newspapers said there were 45 people.



L to R: Willi Senft holds a map showing fields around Irlach, Ken Kraemer, Rudolf Rettinger of Irlach, Thomas (Tom) Kraemer, Richard (Dick) Marino, Sondra Bodendein Kraemer, Janis Kraemer Marino. September 2014

May 2016 Waldmünchen and Irlach: About ten Kraemer families with roots in Plain visited Waldmünchen and toured the home villages of Plain immigrant ancestors. They celebrated the installation of the Kraemer-Blattmeier historical marker on the site of the former home of Paul and Walburga (Stangl) Kraemer (now the Blattmeier property) in the village of Irlach. Kraemer memorabilia was on display in the barn where a dinner took place with speeches and gift exchanges. Several dozen people from local villages participated in the celebration at Irlach including County Administrator Franz Löffler and wife Andrea; Tiefenbach Mayor Ludwig Prögler; Waldmünchen Mayor Markus Ackerman and wife Petra; Rev. Albert Hölzl; Maria, Heide, Robert and Konrad Blattmeier; Claudia, Winfried and Felix Hiob; Brigitta Krämer; Professor Dr. Heinrich Reinermann of Speyer; Willi and Christa Senft (translator); Rudolf and Hildegard (Bauer) Rettinger; Armin, Rupert and Stefan Rettinger; Bernhard Ruhland; Tiefenbach historians Bruno Servi and Richard Bierl; Waldmünchen historian Hansjörg Schneider; Debbie and Georg Blau; Wolfgang and Lissa Laubmeier and daughters; Michaela Babl. Newspaper coverage *Bayerwald Echo*, May 23, 2016: "Der Weg in ein ungewisses Leben" by Ingrid Milutinovic. *Bayerwald Echo*, May 30, 2016: "Eine Auswanderer-Familie findet ihre Wurzeln" by Anna Discherl. *Home News*, July 20, 2016: "Kraemer's trace their roots to Germany." <https://kraemerhistory.org/2016/02/29/150-year-anniversary-historical-plaque>

Ken Kraemer has written several books about the Kraemer family such as the *Wisconsin Kraemers* series (I, II, III) and *Kraemer in Amerika: History and*

*genealogy of the Kraemers from Tiefenbach, Bavaria, Germany, who immigrated to Stearns County, Minnesota, and to Los Angeles, California. **These books and more can be purchased at OFTHS.***



Front: Evonne Kraemer Manning, Ken Kraemer, Debbie Blau, Marty Kraemer, Christa Senft, James Kraemer. Middle: Konrad Blattmeier, Patricia Kraemer Czechanski (hair), Alexandra Tobey, Brenda Kraemer Tobey, Allen Kraemer. Back: B. Ann Kraemer Neviasser, Ludwig Proegler, Willi Senft. May 26, 2016

More individual visits to Germany

- 1996, 2003: Doris (Hetzl) and Tom Danelski visited Tiefenbach, Irlach, and other ancestor villages. The local German newspapers reported on their trip on June 9, 2003, "Auf geschichtlichen Pfaden von Tiefenbach in die 'neue Welt'." A photo showed Doris and Tom presenting Pronold research with Georg Ederer and Tiefenbach mayor Johann Müller. Doris was instrumental in obtaining a version of the 1938 Otto Horz dissertation (**available on DVD at OFTHS**) from Hansjörg Schneider so that people with ties to Plain, Wisconsin, could search for emigrant ancestors.
- Nov. 1999: Gary Haas traveled to Germany with his parents Luella (Bauer) and LaVerne Haas. He met Georg Ederer at the parish office in Waldmünchen and discovered genealogy information for his ancestors. Gary took pictures of the church and cemetery at Ast. Unfortunately, his mother became ill and required hospitalization in Regensburg. See "*Haas & Bauer*" newsletter, March 2000, pages 1-15.
- 2004: Paul Weiss and parents Joan (Ringelstetter) and Robert Weiss visited with Georg Ederer at Waldmünchen. Their Ringelstetter ancestors are from Tiefenbach and Weiss ancestors are from Grafenried and Schindlhof near Schäferrei.
- 2006: Lucille (Lechner) and Joe Wankerl, and Hermine (Schwab) Hausner attended a party in Ast; Joe

gave a speech and said he wished that the American-German connection will continue. He recalled a visit in Plain of Treffelstein's pastor Vollath in 1961, and that Vollath was surprised that Bavarian was spoken in America. Joe presented a gift from the mayor of Plain for the 750th anniversary of Ast. *Bayerwald Echo*, Aug. 10, 2006, "Deutsch-amerikanisches Treffen bei der 'Muttergottes von Ast'" and Aug. 18, 2006, "Ständchen für den Sangesbruder Willi Senft"

- Celeste Hayes of Tennessee who has Ruhland ancestors from Hocha and Untergrafenried, and Hetzel ancestors from Schäferei, visited Georg Ederer in 2010 and 2012, and continues to visit friends in the Ast area.

- 2012: Ken Kraemer met with Georg and Debbie Blau on a research trip and presented a DVD, "*The collected works of Georg Ederer, Otto Horz, and Hansjörg Schneider*" to the city of Waldmünchen. See OFTHS newsletter Dec. 2011. Newspaper articles were in the *Bayerwald Echo*, *Chamer Zeitung*, *Home News*, *Sauk Prairie Eagle*, *Reedsburg Independent*, *Baraboo News Republic*, *Reedsburg Times*, *Richland Observer*, *Voice of the River Valley*; also WRCO radio interview with Eugene Hausner and Mary Jayne Diehl Liegel.

The DVD is for sale from OFTHS.

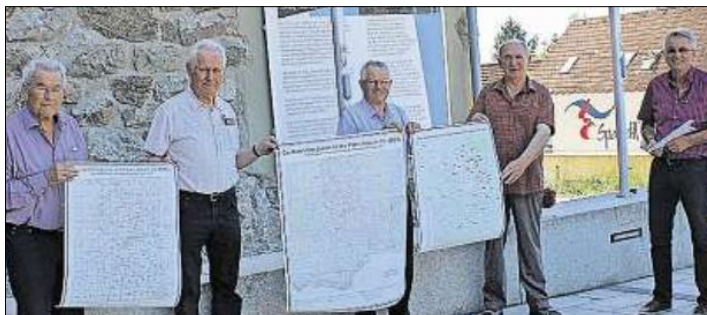
- 2014: Joseph and Lucille (Lechner) Wankel traveled to Germany with their children Rev. Gary, Mary Peck, Lu Ann Johnson, and Beth Nagel. In 2012, Joe's book, *John Wankel and Bertha Beer - Lest We Forget* was presented by Christa Senft and Franz Priffling to Franz Haberl, mayor of Pemfling. *Bayerwald Echo*, June 21, 2012, page 32.

- 2016 & 2017: Steve and Nancy Ring (grew up in Plain), Allen and Jane Liegel along with Jerry and Elaine Gerber of Madison visited Germany.

- 2016, 2017, 2019: Brothers Russell & George Elliott (the latter born in Franklin Township), whose mother Elizabeth Neumeier was born in Plain, researched in Rhan (county of Cham) where their grandfather Georg Neumeier was born in 1880 to Georg Brey and Katharina Neumeier. George Brey would later marry Theresia Liegel and Mary Blau of Plain.

- 2015, 2017, 2018: Ken Kraemer visited historians Richard Bierl and Bruno Servi and Tiefenbach Mayor Ludwig Prögler to present his Paul Kraemer family books (*Wisconsin Kraemers*). Gifted to the Tiefenbach archive were 6'x8' family trees of Paul and Peter Kraemer families and large Bavarian and Sauk County immigrant location maps created by Marty, Tom, and Ken Kraemer. Ken also met with Georg and Debbie

Blau and Willi and Christa Senft to conduct research in Amberg, Untergrafenried, Höll, Breitenried, Ast, Tiefenbach, and Englmannsbrunn, which resulted in the book, *Johann Sebastian Bauer and the Bauers of Untergrafenried, Bavaria, Germany and Plain, Sauk County, Wisconsin (2019)*, **for sale from OFTHS**



With maps: Richard Bierl, Bruno Servi, Rudolf Rettinger, Johann Müller, mayor Ludwig Prögler. Bayerwald Echo June 19, 2021

- 2017: Mary (Kritz) and Douglas Gurak of Spring Green visited Germany.

- 2018: Beatrice Ringelstetter Blau and daughters Diane (Blau) and Mike Barberino and Adam, Brenda Blau, and Debbie and Georg Blau visited ancestor villages including Gleissenberg, Treffelstein, Tiefenbach, Irlach, Waldmünchen, Ast, Schömersdorf, Teunz, Steinlohe, and Untergrafenried.

- 2019: Mary Jane (Layton) and Jerry Dietzman, Alice (Kraemer) and Bill Brickl visited Germany.

Sister City Relationship

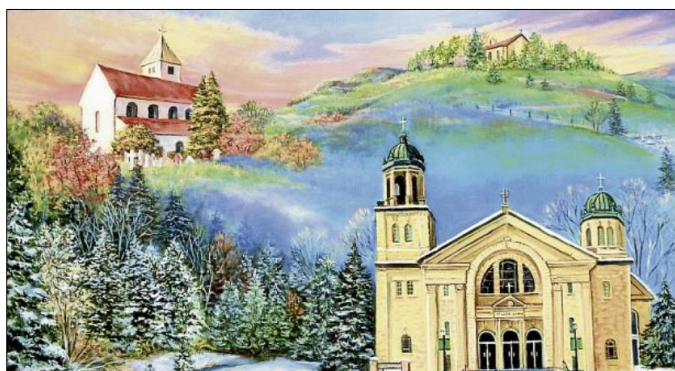
Taken together, these visits and exchanges provide a basis for establishing a sister city relationship between Plain and a Bavarian city such as Waldmünchen. Perhaps the next group exchange can implement an agreement. Such a group trip for Plain area visitors to Germany was planned for 2016 but was canceled after a terrorist attack in Paris, France, caused a fear of traveling to Europe. The Covid 19 pandemic in early 2020 put a stop to travel of all kinds, and especially that of large groups and international travel. It will likely be another year or two before some brave soul organizes another exchange. The exchanges have been very successful in the past because they have been short, combined with sightseeing which everyone likes to do, well-planned by the organizer(s), and nicely supported by a travel company.

If you have visited Germany, we would love to hear your story. See our contact info on the last page.

Ast-Waldmünchen - Plain USA friendship artwork



The beautiful glass etching above in red and yellow colors, commissioned by Lissa Laubmeier, was created at Weinfurter Glashütte (glass factory) at Arnbruck, Bavaria. Responsible for the metal frame and installation were Reinhard Mauerer, Franz Hausner, and Wolfgang Laubmeier. The sign was unveiled at a ceremony held on September 9, 2010, at the "Pfarrer-Arnold Platz" in Ast. On the left is a depiction of Wallfahrtskirche Mariä Himmelfahrt - Unserer Lieben Frau pilgrimage church in Ast. On the right is St. Luke's Catholic Church at Plain. A path connects the two churches with the words "von Freunden für Freunde." Engraved on the bottom center is a translation, "from friends for friends." This artwork serves to reinforce the strong connection and friendship between the people of Waldmünchen and Ast in Bavaria, Germany, and the people of Plain in Wisconsin.



The etching in Ast inspired JoAnn Liegel Schanke of Plain to commission artist Jan Devolder Biggers to paint a likeness in December 2010. Jan, an artist and storybook writer, had moved to the Plain area in 1996. Jan's oil painting shows St. Luke's Catholic church in

Plain (in the foreground), Wallfahrtskirche Mariä Himmelfahrt - Unserer Lieben Frau pilgrimage church at Ast on the left, and St. Anne chapel at Plain on the top of the hill. According to the Dec. 2010 OFTHS newsletter, anyone who donated \$25 to the project was to receive an 8x10 inch print. The painting was displayed on a wall in the basement of St. Luke's Catholic Church. Jan Biggers, who died in Maine in 2016 at age 88, also painted likenesses of Rev. Michael Resop and Sister Helen Marie Doll in 2000. Their portraits were placed in beautiful golden frames. In 2010, Jan repainted the Stations of the Cross leading to St. Anne's Chapel. In 2012, a lap-sized quilt was made to match Jan's painting.



A copy of the oil painting was given to Rev. Raimund Arnold at Ast and was displayed inside the pilgrimage church.

In August 2012, Christina Wutz, an artist from Kritzenast near Ast, designed a likeness of the glass etching in Ast and Jan Biggers' painting. Her work was featured in the *Bayerwald Echo*, August 18-19, 2012. The Wutz painting is on a wooden board about 6 feet tall and was given to Christa Senft for her work as translator and for helping to bring families together. In the Wutz design, the churches on the top represent St. Anne Chapel and St. Luke Church in Plain. In the middle is a radiant Virgin Mary. On the bottom are the two churches at Ast, the Frauenbrunnkapelle with "zwiebelturm" (onion tower) and Mariä Himmelfahrt church on the left side.

The Plain Literary Society will meet at the Plain school house, Feb. 29, at 7 o'clock p. m. The teacher will present a paper entitled "The Royal Path to Success" said paper being addressed to both pupils and parents. Hence it is requested that parents as well as pupils attend.

February 21, 1884, *Weekly Home News*



Does this road look familiar? Highway 23 near Plain in 1929.

Local residents honored

Joseph and Lucille (Lechner) Wankerl were chosen by OFTHS as this year's Man and Woman of the Year. They were honored at the Plain Fire & EMS celebration parade on July 31, 2022. Chauffeuring were Richard and Constance (Thering) Alt. Congratulations Joe and Lucille! Following is a snippet from the *Home News* dated August 3, 2022.



**Joe & Lucille Wankerl---- A life well lived:
Old Franklin Township
Historical Society names
Man and Woman of the Year**

Do you have a story to tell?

Let us know if you would like to submit a story, memory of the Plain area, and/or photos for upcoming newsletters.

Become a member of the Old Franklin Township Historical Society

Membership per calendar year: Individual \$15; Family \$25; and Sponsor \$100. All monetary donations are accepted. Send to: OFTHS, 915 Wachter Ave, P.O. Box 218, Plain, WI 53577. Members will receive a newsletter by mail and can request copies of specific items in our new digital collection.



From the President's desk....

The September newsletter brings you several interesting feature articles written by Ken Kraemer and Debbie Blau. It is remarkable that so many relatives of German immigrants that settled in the Township of Franklin and the Village of Plain, Wisconsin, have visited their roots in Germany, and that there were so many exchange trips back to Plain by Germans. It is indeed interesting to note that the visits date back to at least 1929. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, restrictions on travel, especially for groups, put a damper on international travel.

I hope everyone will take the opportunity to visit the OFTHS museum during our colorful fall season. Please contact us to make arrangements to see our collection - by checking the OFTHS website or emailing us at plainofths@gmail.com. Wishing you all an enjoyable time reading our fall newsletter.

Until next time..... Eugene Hausner

email: eugenehausner@gmail.com

*My imagination makes me human and makes me a fool;
it gives me all the world and exiles me from it.*

~ Ursula K. Le Guin

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