

Observations by Glen V.T. Linscheid

The Galician Descendents of Minnesota.

My interest in the genealogical study of Galician Mennonite descendants was piqued by a request to coordinate the 1981 Galician Centennial Reunion. This event brought me in contact with many Galician descendants in the US and world wide. My primary contact at the time was with the West German Mennonite genealogical and historic Task Group led by Arnold Bachmann. This archival unit had publication objectives in planning stages which led to the release of three major printing projects: 1) a reprint of the 1934 Mennoniten In Kleinpolen (*Peter Bachmann*); 2) the 1984 Galizien Mennoniten Im Wandel der Zieten (*Arnold Bachmann*); and 3) a set of the large Galician surname genealogical charts.

These developments also led to contacts with a number of additional archival units, both domestic and foreign, holding Galician descendant records from Swiss origins, to the German Palatinate, and to Galicia.

World Wars I & II caused great upheavals of Galician descendant dispersion resulting in the relocation of many displaced persons and families to the USA, South America and other world wide locations, to begin life anew. These people provided another valuable source of reference on 'old country' perspectives.

My chance meeting of Thomas P. Miller of Jackson, TN, who has Ewy paternal roots and was orphaned at an early age, proved to be a serendipitous 'mother lode'. Tom Miller is a computer whiz! I and many others channeled genealogical updated data to him, and all this information was added to the base established by the German Task Group mentioned earlier. The ultimate

outcome of this effort was the 1998 release of the nine volume Galician Family Study. Updating this 20,000+ database of Galician surnames, plus spouses and extended families is in a continual process actively pursued.

My recollection of the Bergthold surname leads to Gustav and Emma (Witt) Bergthold and their children into each succeeding generation. Gust, as he was much more commonly known, was an electrician residing in Butterfield, MN. Their children attended the local public school. They were the single Bergthold family in our community. Now the single remaining vestige of the Bergthold surname is preserved on local gravestones and in historic photo albums.

In the early 1880s when over half of the Galician Mennonite population heeded the 'New World' call, it causes one to wonder and ponder as to these promptings. It also brings into question the reason for tiny Butterfield, MN, to be the final destination, even if only for a brief time, for these early pioneers. Within a short time, they claimed rural and town addresses in neighboring Mt. Lake, St. James, and Rose Hill Township located several miles south of Westbrook, MN, in Cottonwood County. In these locations these hardy folks developed a high level of agricultural practices, raised their families, and provided for social and spiritual amenities. This dispersion continued to include residential locations in all points of the compass and distances from their original Butterfield locus.

I could take you to the house in which Gust and Emma lived with their family. I could show you the remaining foundation of the

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Jacob and Barbara (Linscheid) Bergthold house located a short distance north of Butterfield. They lived in this location only a short time before relocating to Reedley, CA. This house was destroyed by fire after Bergthold's no longer lived in that location.

Then I could take you to my grandfather's farm a short distance west of Butterfield (J. J. and Barbara (Hubin) Linscheid) to show you a gravestone of Johann Bergthold. Eight burials were made across the road (to the northeast) from J. J.'s farm. The land encompassing this burial plot has been farmed over for many years, and this gravestone, in good condition, remains the final object to remind us of those eight burials. This gravestone has been removed from its original setting, and is stored in a deteriorating barn on J. J.'s farm site.

Currently, the largest concentration of the Bergthold surname is on the West Coast, and mainly in California. Each year—end, I edit and produce a newsletter titled Along the Galician Grapevine, and the mailing list reveals eleven Bergthold addresses, all on the West Coast (and this certainly isn't the total number)

My linkage to the Bergthold surname comes through early intermarriages in Galicia, which was quite common to the social customs of past centuries. The Galician descendants marriage records cite Daniel Bergthold (1821-?) marrying Katharina Linscheid (1831 - unknown Russia). Their oldest son, Rudolf Bergthold (1862 - unknown Russia) married Pauline Linscheid (1874 - 1971). These are typical Galician surname entries, and were repeated over and over during their sojourn in Galicia. This pattern was to change drastically with the

second generation US born. Marrying within the Galician descendant fold was to take a massive hit! Spousal surnames indicated in untold numbers were drawn from nearly every ethnic gene pool. This pattern exploded into succeeding generations and continues to manifest itself in that manner. Many examples could be drawn from our genealogical records to highlight this spousal flow entering Galician descendant lines bringing an array of interesting and talented input into the Galician 'melting pot or smorgasbord! Take this example: Stacy (Epp) Umstatter, whose maternal grandmother is Kintzi), recently earned a double Ph.D. from Michigan State University. Now Umstatter does not match any of the Galician surnames, but her husband is a dairy expert in German agriculture just one example of this pattern being 'bent out of shape'.

My estimation is that the largest concentrations of Galician descendants reside in the states of Minnesota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Oregon and California.

In May of 2002, my interest in our collective heritage led to organizing and directing a group tour under the banner "Following Forbears Footprints to Germany, Switzerland and Galicia" (currently Ukraine). We visited many sites where our forbears lived before coming to the New World. We visited the archival repository in Weierhof, Germany, where the early church records of birth, baptism, marriage and death are preserved. We visited a castle (read: prison) in Switzerland where many early followers of the Anabaptist faith were imprisoned because of the firm stand they had taken against the status quo of state and belief. This was a most memorable two

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week swing through our past, and we left enough things and places unseen for another trip.

Conclusion:

It is highly interesting for me to note the growing interest in Galician descendant genealogy and history. This Bergthold volume is another excellent example of adding to our collective knowledge of our past. I highly commend Gary and Roland Bergthold for initiating this project and carrying it to a successful birth! It follows earlier efforts to document Galician family lines by interested personalities, who have devoted time, effort and travel to accomplish publication objectives. All such efforts add to the sum total of our collective past, and contribute to the legacy we pass to future generations.

Glen Linscheid May/2 003