

Gloeckelberg strengthens area connections

Pine City families bond over their ancestors' histories in Gloeckelberg, Czech Republic

by Judy Lawhon
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Pat Taylor was scheduled to be at a family gathering at the home of Joy and Ed Pangerl in Pine City last November. She planned to share information about the family's ancestors and a church and cemetery restoration project in Gloeckelberg, Czech Republic that had a family connection.

However, a medical emergency kept her from attending the get together, so the rest of the family viewed a DVD about the Gloeckelberg project without her. Pat was able to visit Pine City recently and share the rest of the story.

The Gloeckelberg story

Gloeckelberg's origins have been traced to 1588. In 1670 four charcoal makers and carpenters were settled there. Gloeckelberg was behind the Iron Curtain from 1946 until 1985 when the Velvet Revolution took place.

In 1985, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were formed. Barbed wire was removed and on April 29, 1990, the Western world could finally reach Gloeckelberg. Until then, a fence had separated it from the Austrian border. A Soviet military contingent guarded the border.

In 1794, a stone church was erected. It burned and was rebuilt in 1879. The church closed in October 1946 when all German-speaking inhabitants were expelled. The Communist government destroyed the town and covered the cemetery with two feet of soil.

In 1990, a group called Arge Sumava Bohmerwald was formed. Their goal was to restore the Gloeckelberg Church and cemetery. The church was in extreme



The farm on Brunswick Road is where Herman and Frank Pranghofer emigrated. Herman emigrated in the 1880s and married Francis Pangerl.

need of repair from years of being abandoned.

The group was given permission to begin work on the cemetery and church. Former inhabitants of Gloeckelberg and their descendants came from Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic to help with this overwhelming task.

The first job was to take down 300 trees that had grown up on the cemetery site. Finally, 100 tombstones were found and set right. There had to be much digging with old equipment, then the tombstones were scrubbed with wire brushes and reset. Even young children helped with the project.

Fortunately, there were still records of who was buried in the cemetery. The project took time and dedication, and the narrator on the DVD called it, "like putting together a puzzle."

By 1992, the Gloeckelberg Church was reconsecrated and since Oct. 2, 1993, the church bells ring again.

Pine City connections

Judy Pangerl Mueller,



DIGGING potatoes. Back row: Dave and Anna Rothenbacher Pranghofer, Frances (Pangerl) and Frank Pranghofer. Front row: Mildred Pranghofer Micko, George and Josephine Pranghofer. Dave and Anna are Pat Taylor's grandparents and Mildred is her mother.

sister of Ed and daughter of Arne Pangerl of Pine City, said it is interesting that so many families from the Gloeckelberg area settled in Pine City. She said she has been told that they chose this area because the landscape reminded them of Gloeckelberg.

"The Pangerl name is very common in this area. We are related to everybody. We are connected to

a lot of people," Judy said.

Pat Taylor's mother, Mildred, is a first cousin to Judy's father, Arne Pangerl.

Pat spent summers with her maternal grandparents, David and Anna Rothenbacher Pranghofer at their farm on Brunswick Road in Royalton Township in Pine County.

Pat remembers the last names of her grandparents

neighbors- Jungbauer, Saumer, Osen, Erhjeart, Wimmer, Petchel, Schlager, Bernecker and Pangerl.

Years later while doing genealogy research, she found these same names on the U.S. census as having immigrated to the United States in the 1880s from Austria or Bohemia.

Her grandfather's mother, Francis Pangerl, and his father, Herman, came to the U.S. in the 1880s and her grandmother's mother, Mary Micko, was from Gloeckelberg.

In 2002, Pat and her husband, Don, went to Germany. They met relatives Christa Pranghofer Eisenkolk and her brothers Emil and Franz. They shared information about their ancestry and the name Pangerl was familiar to them as well. Christa is a descendent of Anton Pranghofer, brother of Pat's great grandfather, Herman.

Visiting Gloeckelberg

In 2005, Pat and Don returned to Germany. This time they were able to visit Gloeckelberg and walk the path into the place that has once been home to their ancestors.

"Imagining what those relatives experienced or endured until they reached and were settled on the Brunswick Road in Pine County boggles my mind," Pat wrote.

Pat and Don found remnants of the foundation from the Pranghofer house. Franz had lived in this home until age four when the German-speaking people in this area were expelled. The Pranghofers were woodsmen who made charcoal which was used to provide the intense heat necessary

in making glass. A factory for this purpose was located in Gloeckelberg and owned by the Schlagl Monastery in Austria.

Pat is excited about the preservation of the church. She has helped raise funds to support this huge task. She is also excited about the connections among the families who are long-time Pine City residents.

She has fond memories of her days at her maternal grandparents on Brunswick Road.

"At my grandparents we used real plates, silverware, glasses and cups, no paper stuff for us, and all of it had to be washed by hand after dinner," Pat said. "At threshing time, we could have as much pop as we wanted."

As one person who was viewing the DVD last November said, "Just thinking that this is the church where our great great grandparents worshipped is amazing."

It is amazing, and the connection to Pine City is interesting and intriguing.

"Trying to help people understand how all the relatives are connected is very confusing," Pat said. "I have to explain it many times to people for it to make sense."

But it does make sense that through hard work and dedication, masses are once again being celebrated where the little village of Gloeckelberg once stood.

As the priest said at the rededication mass, "Forgive everything. Move on. Make new history. Don't dwell on the past."

It makes sense that ancestors in a small community in Minnesota, in Pine City, can be part of that past and future.