

Wendish Ancestral Sketches

Following is the first of what we hope will become a continuing series of sketches, each focusing on one individual. The goal for publishing these sketches is to share with all our readers some interesting stories about the individuals and families who came before us. Have you been collecting family history, stories and data and wondered how you could share those interesting stories with others who might be related to you, but grow faint at the thought of trying to write a book about your family history? If so, read the following sketch about Charles George Wukasch – hopefully you will be inspired to write a brief article about your Wendish ancestor and send it to us. We will happily provide editorial assistance. Who knows? The result might just be the compilation of a large collection of stories about our Wendish ancestors that would be preserved so that future generations can also read about their ancestors. If you are interested, please contact Jan Slack, Newsletter editor, at the museum.

Charles George Wukasch, Wendish Businessman

Ken Wukasch

Charles George Wukasch is representative of those Wends who left the agricultural life of Lee County for careers in Texas cities. From 1902 until 1929, he owned and operated Charlie's Confectionery, near the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. His business, located on Guadalupe Street, a stretch next to the campus that later became known as "The Drag," soon became a popular place for students to meet and relax. His business also became an anchor for neighboring business development and provided employment for friends and relatives.

Charles George Wukasch was born January 29, 1875, near Serbin, Texas in Lee County. He was the first and only child born to the marriage of George W. Wukasch and Marie Knippa. When his mother died two weeks later, Charles would be raised by an aunt, Teresa Knippa.

As Charles grew to manhood he found life to be hard on the Wukasch farm near Serbin. The years between 1875 and 1898 were extremely difficult on the Wendish settlers. Drought, combined with poor soil, resulted in the settlers not being able to grow sufficient crops to support their families. Consequently, many of the Wends left Serbin in search of better opportunities.

Just as Charles was questioning his future, the Spanish-American War broke out. On April 18, 1898, Charles traveled to Schulenburg to enlist with Troop G of the 1st Texas Volunteers. He was not sent out of the country, but spent the majority of his time at Camp Mabry in Austin where most of his enlistment involved routine marching and drilling. According to Charles, "discipline was very strict; if soldiers didn't behave and follow orders they would be forced to carry rocks." After the war Charles went to Austin and looked for a job. One of his first job opportunities was with Henry Maerki who managed the Lundberg Bakery on Congress Avenue. Here, Charles learned the skills necessary to successfully operate his own business.

By 1902, Charles had saved and borrowed over \$300 and felt ready for self-enterprise. The population of Austin by 1900 had grown to 22,258—almost double from what it had been in 1890—and the enrollment at the University of Texas was an astounding 986. Charles envisioned being part of a growing and dynamic university community, so in 1902 he opened a sweet shop, Charlie's Confectionery, at the corner of 24th & Guadalupe Street.

In 1904, Charles saw the opportunity to purchase the corner property at 23rd & Guadalupe, across the street from the campus. Charlie's Confectionery was the third business to open on the "Drag." The other two businesses were a saloon and a bank. With his business now established, Charles was ready to take the next step: on August 10, 1903, he married Emma Helen Hannusch in a ceremony at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Winchester, where Emma had grown up.

Charles and Emma returned to Austin immediately to begin their lives together. While the couple worked downstairs they lived upstairs above their business. These early years in business often meant long hours and hard work. Cleaning, mopping, washing, cooking and serving customers left little spare time for family and pleasure.

On July 11, 1904, Charles and Emma were blessed with a daughter, Edna Adeline. On July 24, 1908, a son, Walter Charles was born. On February 20, 1915, the family was completed with the birth of Martin Charles. All three children were born in the upstairs portion of the business that served as the family residence until 1919.

Although successful in business in Austin, Charles never forgot his family in Serbin. Between 1904 and 1920 Charles provided jobs and a place to live for other members of his family. Over time, they would begin their own jobs and businesses that would contribute to the economy and growth of Austin.

By 1919, Charles and Emma had been successful enough to be able to purchase a home not far from the business. As it happened, the timing of this purchase was quite fortunate. On June 4, 1920, a devastating fire broke out on the 23rd block of Guadalupe and within a few hours had completely destroyed Charlie's Confectionery. Following the fire, Charles and Emma were faced with a difficult decision: rebuild or relocate? By 1922, Charles and Emma were able to open a new and thoroughly "modern" Charlie's Confectionery close to the original location and still across the street from the campus.

Always involved in community affairs, Charles was an active member of the Chamber of Commerce and Retail Merchants Association. He also was a generous contributor to the construction of Memorial Stadium, Gregory Gymnasium, and the Student Union Building on the U.T. campus. In 1926, Charles aided in the securing of a campus site for Concordia Lutheran College.

Throughout the 1920s, Charlie's Confectionery became a study hall, meeting place and social center for University of Texas students. Charles' family worked to make the business a success. While attending parochial and public schools the three children cleaned, cooked and waited tables. With only a limited education, it was Charles and Emma's dream to see their children obtain college diplomas. In 1925, Edna became the third woman to receive a degree from the U.T. School of Architectural Engineering. Walter received a B.B.A. degree in 1929 and Martin received his degree in Chemical Engineering in 1941. By 1929, Charles made the

(continued on next page)



C.G. Wukasch, age 21



Charlie's Confectionery ca. 1928

decision to retire and turned the business over to Walter.

Walter had bought property on Lake Travis in the late 1930s so the family was often found in and around the lake's cool and relaxing waters. Vacations were often spent traveling to visit out-of-state relatives or on picnics to favorite Austin landmarks like Barton Springs and Deep Eddy. They also took every opportunity to enjoy time with their eight grandchildren.

Always very active church members, Charles and Emma helped to organize a new congregation in Austin, Trinity Lutheran Church. This new church was dedicated on October 2, 1938. As in business, Charles' generosity to the work of the Lord could be counted on. After the original property had been secured for Trinity, Charles donated the land on which the school now stands; one lot in 1941 and another in 1944. By 1952, the congregation had grown to 575 members creating the need for a new sanctuary. The work of the Lord was very important and special to both of them.

Early on the morning of Tuesday, March 23, 1954, Charles George Wukasch died peacefully at his home. Trinity Lutheran Church was filled to capacity with people of all ages and professions who had known him or whose lives he had touched. Charles was buried in Oakwood Cemetery with full military honors. On April 1, 1964, Emma died in the same home that she had shared with Charles since 1919. She was buried next to Charles in Oakwood Cemetery.

51st Annual Michael Schoppa Family Reunion

June 17, 18 & 19th, 2011

Fathers Day Weekend

Camp Graham Ball

at Lake Kickapoo

RV sites & cabins

Camp opens: Friday 4:00 PM

Camp closes: Sunday 4:00 PM

Questions? Contact

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or Brian Schoppa -

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HELP WANTED

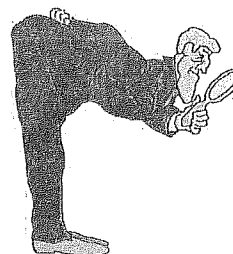
Wendish volunteers forming team to create research website. Many topics include customs, history, religious beliefs, accomplishments, genealogy, and more. Many roles to be filled. Many volunteers needed. Technical & non-technical positions. Learn while helping preserve our history. Visit <http://ResearchProject.info> for more info, or call Weldon at 512-635-6429.

Lower-Wendish Dictionary Available

Martin Dobring is presently accepting pre-orders from those who wish to purchase a copy of the second printing of his Lower-Wendish Dictionary. Please note that this is the Lower Sorbian language, spoken in the Cottbus area of Germany. Martin would like to know how many firm commitments there are before he has them printed. He will sell copies at his cost, which will be about \$16.00 per book plus packaging and shipping costs (\$5 US). Individual copies sent to Australia, Europe, or South Africa presently cost \$16 US each to ship and he anticipates an increase in that cost in the near future.

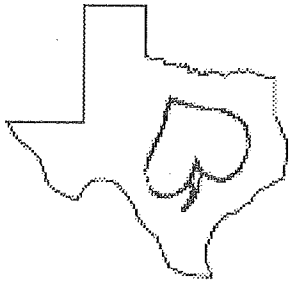
If you are interested in ordering a copy, please contact Martin by mail at 1317 Chestnut St., Port Huron, MI 48060-5719 or by phone at (810) 985-5262.

In Search of...



Shantell Grace is seeking information about the German Mercantile in Thorndale. Her great-great grandfather, J. C. Leschber, went bankrupt following several lawsuits. He, along with several

members, were shareholders of some sort in the German Mercantile. Please contact her if you have any information on the German Mercantile in Thorndale or on the following ancestors: Woelfel, Unnasch, Miller, Schwarz, Simank, Dornbusch, and Leach. Shantelle can be contacted by email at bluebonnet-hill@att.net or by mail at 1205 Buice Drive SW, Lilburn, Georgia 30047.



Texas Wendish Heritage Society

Newsletter

Volume XXIV, Number 2, April 2011

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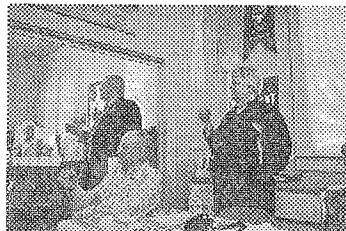
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On Sunday, February 20, the Texas Wendish Heritage Society held the first of a number of events scheduled during 2011 to commemorate the 200th birthday of Rev. Jan Kilian (born at Döhlen on March 22, 1811). During our General Membership Meeting on February 20, a special program was provided by David Goeke, TWHS member, who dressed in period costume as Rev. Kilian and gave a moving and poignant portrayal of Kilian the man, teacher, husband, father, and spiritual leader of his Serbin congregation. The audience was given a clear picture of what life might have been like for Kilian during the 30 years following the 1854 migration. Harsh were the realities of establishing a life in an isolated area of a new country. In addition, Kilian struggled mightily to keep his congregation together and focused on holding fast to their Lutheran faith and their Wendish language. Goeke's presentation provided a richly human face to the often dry facts of historical accounts.



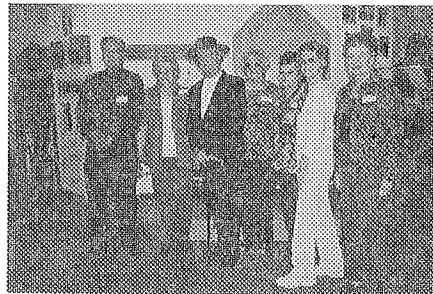
David Goeke as Rev. Jan Kilian
photo courtesy of John Brown

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Dr. David Zersen offering a toast
photo courtesy of John Brown

Another highlight of the afternoon was a presentation by Dr. David Zersen, President Emeritus of Concordia University, Austin, on the history and origins of the ship *Ben Nevis*. Upon discovering that the ship was named after Mount Ben Nevis (the highest peak in the British Isles), he then discovered that the Ben Nevis Distillery, established in 1825, still operates at the foot of the mountain distilling scotch whiskey. Dr. Zersen then went on a search in Austin for a bottle of Ben Nevis scotch. What he was able to locate was a bottle of scotch that, while not carrying the Ben Nevis brand, was however distilled at the Ben Nevis distillery. Samples of the scotch whiskey were passed out to the audience, who drank a toast to those past and present who have helped preserve Wendish culture in Texas.



Dave and Kilian family
photo courtesy of John Brown

Special guests at the February 20 meeting included a number of descendants of Jan and Maria Kilian.

Last but certainly not least, Evelyn Kasper, a long-time T H W S



volunteer, Board member, and Noodle Committee member, was honored for her 22 years of service on the Noodle Committee. Evelyn recently retired from the committee (but not from her other TWHS activities!) and was thanked with a round of applause and a bag of noodles.