

Hans' Journal

A Young German's Memories of His Family's Survival During Germany's Darkest Days.

By Hans H. Saltzwedel

Hans H. Saltzwedel Publisher

Copyright © 2005 Hans H. Saltzwedel

All right reserved.

ISBN: 0-9774574-0-0

Contents

Preface.....	1
Why Am I Here?.....	3
My Mother's Family.....	5
My Father's Family.....	23
My Family.....	35
Interlude I.....	40
My Early Years 1930 - 1934.....	43
Interlude II.....	53
The Years Before The War 1934 - 1937.....	55
Interlude III.....	75
The Last Two Years Of Peace 1937 - 1939.....	81
Interlude IV.....	94
The Beginning Of World War II 1939 - 1942.....	101
Interlude V.....	116
The War Years 1942 - 1944.....	119
Interlude VI.....	148
The Bitter End 1944 - 1945.....	150
The Military Service 1945.....	165
Interlude VII.....	177
The March Into Prison 1945.....	180
Prisoner Of War 1945.....	184
Picking Up The Pieces 1945 - 1949.....	192
A New Dawn 1949 - 1952.....	205
The Voyage To The New World 1952.....	217
Epilog.....	224
Author.....	230

Chapter One

WHY AM I HERE?

How do I begin? My living in the United States today has a strange origin. It started with a cow!

During the 1870's, the brother of my maternal great-grandfather, Victor Toepffer (b. 1839), learned the agricultural trade at a farm in Pomerania. During his apprentice years, he was ordered to sell a cow at

auction in a nearby town. After the sale, Victor kept part of the money and spent it on himself. The incident became known, and his father, a highly-respected businessman, was outraged. He never forgave his son, disinherited him, and shipped him out to America. (The black sheep of the family!)

Victor settled in Stockton, a small town in west central Kansas and started a wheat farm. He married a Kansas girl, Mary Cuddy, and had two children, Edward (b. 1883) and Anna (b. 1884). Surprisingly, oil was discovered on the farm, which enhanced the value of the property. His nephew, Hellmut (my grandfather), saw Victor's exile differently and kept in contact with him.

In 1923, on a journey around the world, my grandfather, grandmother and mother visited Victor in Kansas. A lifelong friendship developed between my mother and Victor's daughter, Anna, and they corresponded regularly.

In the meantime, Anna married Sam Carroll and moved to Omaha. Sam later became a Vice President of the Mutual of Omaha Insurance Company. They had two sons, Hugo and Sam. To further keep in touch, Anna, Sam, and Sam jr. visited us in Germany in 1938. It was a great family reunion, (The 78th anniversary of our cement manufacturing facility) and also my first meeting with the "Americans". They did not speak one word of German; however, my parents were quite fluent in English. I was left out, since I just began to learn English in school and was too shy to practice on them. You guessed it. Thirteen tumultuous years later, the Carroll family sponsored me to start my new life in the United States of America.

Chapter Two

MY MOTHER'S FAMILY

Many people guided me and shaped my life. Let me first acquaint you with where I came from. My mother's family settled about 1800 in the city of Stettin (shte-teen), near the mouth of the Oder River. Stettin is located 50 miles from the Baltic Sea and 70 miles northeast of Berlin. It had the third largest harbor in Germany and was the capital of Pomerania. Today it is the Polish city of Szczecin.

The city has a long, long history. The area was already inhabited before Christ by Germanic tribes. In the 4th century AD, during the migration of nations, the Slavic peoples replaced them. About 1000, the Wends were converted from paganism to Christianity. In 1124, Stettin was the capitol of the duchy of Pomerania. In 1278, Stettin became a city of the Hanseatic League, a medieval federation of North German cities, connected for common commerce and protection. Well, I do not intend to write a history of the city. Many wars, sieges and occupations involving the Poles, Swedes, Danes, and German states took place during the following centuries. Finally in 1720, Pomerania and Stettin were incorporated into the kingdom of Prussia. Well, you get the gist!

Gustav Adolf Toepffer (b. 1805) became an important and influential businessman. For outstanding accomplishments in commerce, the royal Prussian Government bestowed the now forgotten title of "Kommerzienrat" on him, and he was also a delegate to the Pomeranian Diet (Landtag) He married Elise Caroline Grawitz (b. 1810) on October 19, 1833. They had three sons and a daughter. Uncle Victor was their oldest son.

In 1862, G.A. Toepffer and Heinrich Grawitz (b. 1813), his brother-in-law, also a successful businessman who presided over the mercantile league (Kaufmannschaft), founded together the Portland Cement Works "Stern" ("Star" in English), Toepffer, Grawitz & Co. The Grawitz family had been residents of Stettin since 1710. A sizeable deposit of high grade raw material (chalk and clay) necessary

to produce cement, thanks to the ice age (moraine), was discovered in the hills 4 miles east of the city near the small town of Finkenwalde. The factory was built strategically at the edge of the lime pit (Kreidegrube) with access to the Oder River (Reglitz) and railroad.

The factory grew rapidly due to a new manufacturing process actually invented in Portland, England. It was used at the plant. In the next 20 years, citations of excellence and "special first merits" were awarded at many international exhibitions: Philadelphia USA (1876); Sydney, Australia (1879/80) and Austria. Soon the "Star" Cement was known worldwide. It is interesting to note that the "Star" Portland Cement Works Toepffer, Grawitz & Co., in 1886, had an agent in New York City (165 Broadway), by the name of Gustav Grawitz. He was a nephew of the co-founder Heinrich Grawitz. Heinrich did not live long enough to observe the success of the cement work. He died in 1875. Gustav Adolf Toepffer died in 1883, and his youngest son, Albert Eduard Toepffer (b. 1841), took over the management of the factory.

Soon the original cement production of 236 tons was increased to 1/2 million tons. In 1905, an addition to the regular "Star" cement, a white "Star" cement was introduced. This addition was well received, and a long-existing need was fulfilled for the artificial stone industry. Regular customers were established inland and abroad.

Until 1903, the raw material was mined from the deposits in Finkenwalde. It became clear that with increasing demands, there would not be adequate supply. Therefore, a new source had to be found. A farm on the island of Ruegen (Klein Stubben) with ample chalk deposits was purchased. A fleet of 2 tugboats and 9 barges transported the raw material from Ruegen through the Baltic and Stettiner Haff to Finkenwalde. From then on, the local chalk pit was used only in emergencies such as in winter when the water route was frozen and unusable. The "Star" Portland Cement Works gave my family a strong foundation on which to build their affluence.

Let's return to the family. Albert Eduard (my great-grandfather) had 7 sons. Hans died as a child; Hellmut, my grandfather (b. 1876); Fritz (b. 1878); Bruno (b. 1879); Robert (b. 1882); Peter (b. 1884); and Werner (b. 1888).

They all were interesting characters and influenced my life.

Albert Eduard was, as was his father, honored with the title of royal Prussian "Kommerzienrat". He was a well-known personality in Stettin, and according to pictures, in his later years, he was a striking figure with a long white beard: a real family patriarch the way we imagine them. A philanthropist, his sizable donations to the city of Stettin resulted in streets and a prominent park named after him. He was also a collector of Italian Renaissance art. The most influential and most outstanding figure of the six boys was my grandfather. He was over 6-ft. tall and looking back on his life boggles my imagination. Hellmut Toepffer was born on September 1, 1876. It was soon apparent, he was brilliant. He entered the university early and received doctorates in philosophy and chemistry. As a young man, he set his mind on large goals, as we shall see later.

Now we enter the 20th century. My grandfather was married on August 3, 1900, to Else Grawitz, who was born on September 11, 1878. Yes, you heard right. Else was the granddaughter of Heinrich Grawitz, the co-founder of the "Star" cement works. They were distantly related as Hellmut's grandmother was the sister of Heinrich. This consolidated the ownership of the cement works. On June 17, 1901, their only daughter, Ruth, my mother, was born. As a baby, she had an English nanny who taught her English before German. Most often, English nannies were hired by aristocratic families at that time. At the age of four she received her own little pony and accompanied her parents on the morning horse outings

through the forest near their home. Remember the chalk and clay deposits in Finkenwalde?

Surrounding it was a park of approximately 500 acres extending into the forest. It was purchased with this property. The hilly landscape was a natural paradise with old beech trees as far as one could see. The whole area was named "Buchheide" (beech forest). Later in the century, this area was a preferred daytime excursion destination for citizens of Stettin who loved nature. In about 1906, my grandfather built his beautiful mansion in the park about a mile from the street, and soon it became known as the "Parkhaus." The advantages were many: the great property was easily available since it was already owned by the cement factory; it was a short walk to the offices of the plant; the factory produced its own electricity, and the "Parkhaus" was connected. Even during the war the plant provided the necessary power for the estate. There was never a shortage of electricity.

The entrance to the property, leading to the "Parkhaus," was decorated with a beautiful entrance gate, which grandfather acquired at an international exhibition in Paris. On the way up to the house, horse stables and the living quarters of the butler and coachman were erected, flanked by a second gate. At the lower section of the park was an artificial grotto with stalactite and stalagmites beautifully lighted in different colors. The factory workers had their picnics and festivities here.

In front of the grotto were two large arches: one thick and heavy made of normal cement and the other much thinner, of reinforced concrete. Both arches demonstrated the equal tensile strength and showed the advantages of the recently invented concrete. Placed on top of the arches, a music pavilion was built for entertainment in delicate Japanese style. Poles living there today are still using the grotto. They transformed it into a beautiful restaurant. The music pavilion and the reinforced concrete arch did not survive.

But, now let's see what I remember about the great house, where I spent so much of my youth. To help me remember, I have an official 1938 insurance assessment of my grandfather's art collection. This could fill a book by itself, priceless treasures, none of which survived the war. Lost, gone! Just a memory of what had been.

In the "Parkhaus" there were about 30 rooms not including the household areas like the kitchen and pantries. In addition to the two master bedrooms and dressing rooms, nine guestrooms and bathrooms were located on the second floor. Because transportation was not easy during those horse-and-buggy days (a half-hour ride by coach from the railroad station), it was customary for guests or friends to stay overnight.

Also included in the house were a smoking room, lady's writing room, office, a winter garden (solarium), a billiard room and an extensive library with about 5000 books. (I did not count them, but I don't doubt it.) They included 92 volumes by Voltaire, *Oeuvre's Complete Publishing of 1785* in leather bindings and 15 volumes of works by Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, published in 1788, two years after his death. And I assure you, no paperbacks here! There was an East Asiatic room, which contained two leopard skins, one large Buddha on a lotus pedestal, hand-painted two-part East Asian silk screens, and for me the most intriguing, two elephant tusks. In the great entrance hall on cold winter nights a warming fire was burning in a large fireplace, and I remember lounging on an ice bear hide in front of it. The numerous halls and gangways had their treasures as well. My grandmother was an ardent historian about the city of Stettin. She gathered 135 priceless historical framed engravings, etchings, photos, and color graphics, some would be by now over two hundred years old. It was the largest collection outside a museum. They were displayed in one of the hallways connecting the rooms. We also had a large dining room with walls and ceiling paneled with East Asian teakwood. Into the paneling were embedded copies of fine street scenes painted by the famous Spaniard, Bartholomew Esteban Murillo (1618-1682). The large dining table, chairs, cupboards, and sideboards (everything in the room!) were made out of the

same wood. I assume the teak, was bought in Burma during my grandparents' around-the-world journey in 1922.

To take care of the estate, there was a staff of nine: a butler, two chambermaids, a cook, a horseman, a gardener with 2 helpers, and a chauffeur. At large gatherings, banquets or parties, the wives of the butler and chauffeur helped out.

Grandfather Toepffer inherited the passion for Renaissance objects from his father. In about 1909, to crown his collection, he requested and received a special authorization from the Vatican to have made a life-size marble copy of Michelangelo's "Moses." The original is located at San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome. The German sculptor Bernhard Bleeker was commissioned to do the job. I don't know how long it took to carve, but the statue was shipped directly from Rome to Finkenwalde.

As my grandfather's assembly of artwork grew and the question arose as to what to do with it, the logical answer was a donation to the city of Stettin. As it so happened, the building of a new museum was in progress (finished in 1913) and the Toepffers offered the collection to the museum's director, Walter Riezler, with the stipulation that the collection should stay together in a room dedicated to the Toepffers. Riezler and Hellmut Toepffer did not agree and the whole project was abandoned. They never spoke to each other again. There was one exception: the Toepffers donated an enormous bronze statue of the Venetian military leader, Bartolomeo Colleoni, on horseback. The original, sculptured by Bartolomeo del Verrochio (1446-1488), is on display in Venice, Italy. This copy was placed under the center cupola of the new museum, as it was too large for an indoor display. (By the way the museum survived WW II, and the Colleoni statue was shipped to Warsaw after the war, but returned after 58 years and now on display in a prominent street).

After the museum debacle, Grandfather decided to add his own museum to his house. Behind the original building, half of a hill had to be removed to accommodate the extension. The hall had to be in the classical dimensions of 8 m high (26 ft), 12m wide (39 ft), 24 m long (78ft), or about 3,000 sqft. A normal house could have fit easily into that room. There were advantages owning a cement factory! The height alone was impressive. "Moses" presided at the center, in a niche opposite the entrance on the back wall.

Two statues adorned the sides of a huge fireplace on the long wall. Copies of works by Peter Visser (1524-1608), they represented Theodoric (ruler of Italy 493-526) and King Arthur (legendary king in ancient Britain). The original sculptures are displayed at the tomb of Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) in Innsbruck, Austria. Also in this great hall 29 chairs, (17 chairs and 12 armchairs) were placed around a large long table built from one single immense tree trunk. It seated over 30 people comfortably. You could not say the same about the Renaissance chairs of the 15th and 16th centuries. They were definitely beautiful. Along the walls were Italian 16th and 17th century chests and credenzas on which you could find numerous books from the same period. In addition to this art, there were many paintings around this "private" museum. One of the most valuable was an oil painting by the Spanish artist Jusepe de Ribera (1588-1652) known as "The head of an Old Man." My grandparents lived in an elegant household full of rare art and treasures. The physical foundation I have described is the life into which my mother was born.

My grandfather, Hellmut, was destined for greater goals. In 1910, he and the Danish East Asiatic Company in Copenhagen (Denmark), a world-wide concern, founded a vegetable oil manufacturing company, the "Stettiner Oelwerke" in a suburb of Stettin. In 1913, 50,000 tons of soybeans arrived directly from Vladivostock, Russia. Back in Stettin, the oil was first pressed out of the beans and then carefully refined to a high quality, comparable with olive oil. It was used to produce margarine and salad oil. The byproduct with its high content of protein was used as a feed supplement for livestock. Because

of the success in Stettin, in 1915, the company opened a 2nd oil refinery, "Toepffer's Oelwerk" in Hamburg.

Before the beginning of World War I, my grandfather joined the diplomatic corps and transferred the management of the cement work to his youngest brother, Werner, who guided the day-to-day operation until his death of cancer in 1943.

(Continues...)

Excerpted from **Hans' Journal** by **Hans H. Saltzwedel** Copyright © 2005 by Hans H. Saltzwedel. Excerpted by permission.
All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.
Excerpts are provided by Dial-A-Book Inc. solely for the personal use of visitors to this web site.
