Hello, and best wishes to all members of the Texas Wendish Heritage Society members and newsletter readers.

Psalm 118:24: "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. In you, O Sovereign, I trust; do not let me be put to shame. Freely give me help and be glad in your rescue. You have sent a strong one; you have been my salvation, O Lord God. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Editor: John J. Schuba

VISIT THE WENDISH BOOTH AT THE TEXAS FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Thursday - Sunday - - - August 5-7-8-9, 1981

Officials host and hostess:
Walter and Marie Schimanka
NEXI T TIME YOU ARE IN THE CENTRAL TEXAS
AREA NEAR GIDDINGS, PLAN TO VISIT THE
WESLEYAN HERITAGE SOCIETY MUSEUM ON
FERRIN, HOME OF THE WESGNS OF TEXAS
SINCE 1685, WHEN THEY PURCHASED A
LEAGUE OF LAND ON THE ABSEOM OF A-
PLAIN SURVEY.

Walter Gerich, active leader in the Wesleyan Heritage
Society, describes the wood-chipping methods. For News
Letter John J. Sechb as interested members look on.
Gerich gave a full-scale demonstration during the
Society meeting at the Museum that same day.
The Texas Red River Heritage Society Museum, which is still being developed, is open to the public every Sunday afternoon. The unselfish devotion of the volunteers who serve as attendants is deeply appreciated. I plan to visit the museum and get acquainted with the great wealth of research data.

A family group visiting the museum enjoy an exhibit of many and varied artifacts, given or loaned to the Musuem. Exhibits include authentic clothing, books - Bibles, Hymnals, Catechisms, etc.
Two years ago, when I began searching for my ancestors, I could not find anyone who had ever a vague idea where in Germany the Leschbers (my mother's side of the family) had come from. Painstakingly I researched, and discovered not only my original ancestral home, but also cousins in both East and West Germany. Now, as a result of my research, I have met and visited with five Lescher families in the DDR and four in West Germany.

Planning the trip myself was tedious. Despite the care I had taken, my excitement was still at an extreme high when, on October 8, 1980 with visa, passport, and other required papers, I was admitted to the DDR at 'Checkpoint Charlie.' According to the West German border guards I had talked with the day before, I was the first tourist to enter the DDR with a car at Checkpoint Charlie, which had previously been a crossing point for diplomats and military personnel only. This was to work to my advantage a week later when, as I was leaving, the guards were apparently not familiar with the proper procedure and neglected to charge me a road-user tax. With legal formalities out of the way, I was free to follow the directions on the map that my Lescher kinfolk had thoughtfully provided and soon found the autobahn that took me to the Spreewald and Bautzen. Along the autobahn route numerous stops at places of interest to me, including the old villages of Bier and Velten in the Spreewald. In the Spreewald many old women lined the sides of the autobahn selling baskets of colorful 'Fildern' that grew wild there. In Bautzen, the October harvest was well underway, with potatoes being the largest crop. With new sight, enhanced by the very pleasant weather, became unforgettable.

When I arrived in Bautzen, I was warmly welcomed by my cousin Martin Lescher, his wife, and their three children. (To be continued.)

This is exactly one-half of the story as told by Henry W. Schmidt Jr. about his 1980 trip to the Spreewald and Bautzen. We hope to complete the story in the next edit
Kendish—language Gravestones at Serbin and Old Kerda

by Prof. Joseph Wilson, Rice University

In Texas, as had been the case in Germany previously, the
Wends used German as their more official language, therefore
it is not surprising that their grave inscriptions were also
in German. Until about nine months ago, I believed that there
were no Wendish-language gravestones at Serbin. The only use
of Wendish I had found at all was on a bilingual German and
Kendish stone in the Old Kerda (Old Holy Cross) cemetery,
which will be described below. However, last fall, while
completing an article on the Wends and their gravestones, I
made a last search at Serbin cemetery for any use of Wendish
—and was happy to discover a beautiful Kendish inscription,
apparently the only one, and previously unknown. The stone
is unfortunately broken at the base and in the middle, but
could probably be easily restored. This grave is not one
of the oldest, but rather as from 1839 -- 35 years after the
arrival in Texas. It is located in the eastmost row, 15th
stone from the south end. The grave is that of a
fortynine-year old young man, Emil A. Mierischin,
founder of the present Carl Schirmer Club, and am today
I find the image of such an intimate friend. The inscription
which is in beautiful Old-Serbian letters (called "Fraelect"
or "Czeck"), reads:

They engraveth ye wiim Hiusu

Emil A. Mierischin

rodil. 1839 Nov. 1. 1874
worb. 1882 Oct. 25, 1889

Hyrxt hove fejolne gent, sa Fisko Kieszki,
du hovje buje nemakone, selod ne wjednevo neka. Hovje,
Hyrxt ne bojji ome prakem, jiv om gubji vezek Stern
11 to pravje zeni, nivo veseh naseljut.

The spelling is the 17th century Lutheran Kendish standard,
as was used by the Wends in Germany and Texas. It was natural
based on German spelling and differs considerably from modern
Wendish spelling, which looks more like Czech or Polish. The
"enter B" is the German letter and; it is often transformed
as ce or se.

The line before the name means "Here rests in the Lord." The
verses which follow are the third verse of hymn 488 of the
Wendish Songbook. This hymn is a translation of the German
hymn 413, "Lasset ab, die weine Lieben, lassent sie non Trauert,
herz," which is apparently unknown in English.
In the German, the third verse reads:

To des Bundes Jesus Wunden hab ich mich geschlossen ein,
Da ich alles reinlich finden, wodurch ich selleig sein
Er ist die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt allezeit;
wor diebel' ergriff im Glauben,
dem kann nichts den Himmel rauben.

A literal (non-poetical) translation of the Wendish verse would be:

"Christ's holy wounds, they are my refuge, / where everything will be found which will eternally rest.
Christ with his suffering is our justification before God.
In who believes correctly in that, nothing will drive
out of Heaven."

The bilingual old Wurda inscription reads as follows:

Maria Schoppa
geb. 29. Jun. 1840
gest. 15. Jan. 1881

Wie wohl ist dir, o Freund der Schalen,
was(?) ich in Deiner Liebe ruhe.

Mit ah, ich bin, dyk mitopdjein,
moj Jesu, u Tangie Johadi.

"Here the verse, first given in German, then in English,
and from after 252 of the German hymnbook and 11 of the Wends.
In this case there is an English translation, from 362, where these lines are consistent:

"My soul's best friend, those joy and blessing,
my spirit ever finds in thee."

A more literal translation of the Wendsch could be:

"Now blessed I am when I rest,
O Jesus, in thy love."

It is noteworthy that these two Wendish-engaged inscriptions, probably the only ones in Texas, are from the 1880s.
A generation after the arrival here, the oldest waves, Narbin are from the 1940s, and are all in German. We unfortunately know nothing about the grave-makers of the first few years, which have all been lost, possibly because they may have been made of wood. We can only see their own, too, were in German. The circumcision of the 1850s which was based partly on language preferences, was, in the 1860s, long past, so there seems to have been no attempt, except for the use of Wendish in these two cases; the notation was, no doubt, simply the individual devotion of the two families to Wendish.
ABOUT JACK RITTAHOUSE

(Editor, John J. Schoe, says:) In my file is a copy of a letter to Paul Eiler by an unknown writer living in Victoria, Texas. (Hope we can identify the writer.)

Eiler says: "There lived in Houston in the days I had my book operation there, a man named Jack Rittenhouse. He was a man of many parts in the book world. When I first knew him (we were both charter members of the Houston Civil War Round Table), he edited and published the company magazine and trade journal for the Saroid Corp., which is an oil well and co. He had come to Houston from California. He was a member of the Typophiles. This is a national group that have their own small printing presses and collect early day type from nothing later than 1900. He called his press the Stagecoach Press. Used to in his free time chase some ghosts and print up defunct newspapers in small county post towns to buy their old type. It was in just such a hush that he came to Texas. There he found the type that had been used to print a Wendish paper. (It was printed in the old The Ciddings Deutsche Volksschrift. Md.) He bought it all. Plus the other printing tools and in and out of there — there was about three tons of type in a "stick" being set but never finished. When answer-able, he discovered the story of the Christ Child — apparently by a Christmas edition. So Jack Rittenhouse, every Christmas, would send his friends absolutely unique Christmas greetings. Always something he had created himself of such thought. Each presentation was a superb thing. One Christmas he sent to the middle east and got authentic spices and in a small box, sent each of us some frankincense, and sugar. For the gold, he laid in a small piece of gold leaf. And in his own small press, included the Christmas story as it is told in the gospels — sing Mark. So there was a Christmas when we sent this story the Wendish typesetter (No doubt, Albert Nietschkin, Ed.) had set. And with it a small brochure explaining the background of it all and where and when he had found it. He now lives and operates as a rare book dealer in Albuquerque, N. M." — WE NEED SOME OF THESE ITEMS IN THE WENDISH MUSEUM." Editor, J.J.

Jack B. Rittenhouse
Albuquerque

(No) Solano Dr. S.E.
Phone 2-34711
The members that have not paid their dues by the August meeting will be dropped from the membership list. That would mean that delinquent members will no longer receive our Society mailings and we will have lost a good member.

We would welcome opinions that measure the extent that our programs and activities are reaching our members. Would you like to comment on this matter? Let's hear from you.

I feel that it is always necessary to encourage members to be active in the preservation of our German heritage. It is a commitment that should challenge every member. The historic information that we are dedicated to collect is found to a great extent with the individual and family collections.

Any private organization must of necessity have a well-trained, well-informed, throughout the year for financial support. We are at the present time working on Phase II, which is the completion of the schoolhouse. For the Museum, we encourage the idea of Memorial Wreaths and direct contributions for the support of our present project.

Best Wishes, Katy, Texas

THE OBJECTIVES of the German Heritage Society are published quarterly in the interest of preserving and promoting the history of our Society and their interest in preserving the cultural heritage of the land of Texas. (P.O. Box 722, Rev. John J. Schell, (a Slovak), Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Old Stone Box, Texas, and Manager of the Giddings, Lee County, Texas, Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 150, Giddings, Texas 78942 713/997-3450)

C.H. WES - Elected November 9, 1950:

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Membership is open to anyone, $5.00 per year.