The Fraktur

Vol III, Nr. 6

JUNE 1990

OBERAMMERGAU

It was the year 1633 and guards were at road entrances to towns all over Europe.

The dreaded plague was taking its toll.

But Kaspar Schisler wanted to go home. He waited for nightfall, then crossed open fields to escape the guards, and came home to Oberammergau in southern Bavaria.

Apparently on his travels he had been bitten by a rat or fleas were on his clothing. Nearly 100 citizens of Oberammergau died of the plague that year.

Villagers gathered in the local Roman Catholic church and vowed before the altar that should the plague be lifted from the community, they would enact the events of Passion Week each decade. The plague was lifted. The Passion Play was first performed in 1634; and in 1644, 1654, 1664 and 1674. Beginning in 1680 they decided to enact it in decennial years. No play was enacted in 1870; the 1920



A skeletal representation of Pestilence wields a sickle on a 75-Pfennig note of Oberammergau, issued July 1, 1921, printed by Brend'Amour, Simhart & Co., Muenchen.

play was performed in 1922; and there was no play in 1940.

For the 36th time, the play is scheduled in 1990 five days a week, running from 8:15 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a mid-day break of 2 1/2 hours.

Scientists tell us that the infectious fever commonly referred to as the "plague" is the "Pasteurella pestis," a disease of rodents, including rats, squirrels, gerbils, prairie dogs, and the fleas which often inhabit them.

Forms of the disease include bubonic, a swelling of the lymph nodes; pneumonic, involving the lungs; and septicemic, in which the blood stream is involved.

As plagues go, 1633 was not especially serious; in the 14th century the Black Plague accounted for deaths of one-fourth of the population of Europe. In 1664-1665 the Great Plague in London was memorable.

In recent decades, it has been the practice of the mayor of Oberammergau to convene the villagers two summers before the play is scheduled for performances. It is necessary to gain their approval of the production. The following summer a committee including the mayor, 17 councillors and six villagers selects the cast. Over the years, the same person may perform the part of a child, a young man, a disciple, or even, the Christ.

In the year before the performance men allow their hair and beards to grow; wigs and make-up are not allowed. It has been said that one of every three men in the village has performed in the play.

The village of Oberammergau has a population of 5,000; 1,700 are active in the play, including a chorus of 50 and 124 speaking parts.

The play runs from May to September. When the final performance is given, the cast makes a pilgrimage on foot the three miles to Ettal monastery. Later there are visits to local Gasthaueser.

Proceeds from the play are divided: one quarter to the next play; one quarter to the local church; one quarter, for housing for visitors; and a quarter to the cast. In 1960 the maximum paid to one performer for the season was $1,865.

Meistersinger Sebastian Wild and the Augsburg Passion formed the texts which were combined for the first play. In 1680 Johann Aelbel altered the text; again, in 1760, Father Ferdinand Roisner wrote the text. In recent years there has been controversy in which it was said that the play was but refined National Socialist propaganda. In 1970, many Jews cancelled reservations in view of charges that the play improperly depicted the Jews, citing its anti-Jewish content.

The audience sits under cover, watching the performance on an open-air stage. A backdrop is formed by Kofel Mountain. This mountain is shown on the zinc and iron five, 10 and 50-Pfennig coins of Oberammergau, 1917, and surmounted by a cross.

Oberammergau is 13 miles north of Garmish-Partenkirchen, site of an American Forces recreation center, especially popular in the ski season. Oberammergau features its own excellent skiing.

And what does a citizen of Oberammergau do for nine years between plays? Wood carving is popular. For 10 Mark, a student enrolls in a three-month class, adding three Mark for wood which he will use. The class is offered by the State of Bavaria, and the school keeps all carvings, selling them to support the school. Even Americans have enrolled in the school.

Wood carving in the village dates back to the 10th century. In the Heimat Museum one can see a pear wood carving dating to the 1600s.

The ammer is a popular bird in Germany, called the bunting in America. The Ammer river runs through the villages of Ober and Unterammergau; a gau is a region or district.

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NOTGELD COUNTRY...REVISITED

Thueringen (Part II)

By Hermann Krause
(Continued from May 1990)

Better than descriptive words are pictures. It so happens that the picture again is by Georg Koetschau. Take a look at the first (they are numbered) of the five 50-Pfennig notes of the Schwarzburg (1178) set. As a boy I used to pick wild raspberries, blueberries and all kinds of mushrooms in those woods.

At Schwarzburg the valley widens to a circular basin in the center of which rises a cone-shaped hill crowned by the magnificent castle of the Princes of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt. "The Pearl of Thuringia" is its poetic byname and it is pictured on the second 50-Pfennig note; also it is shown on one of the two 25-Pfennig notes.

When we reached a hill opposite the castle and looked down on it, I could hardly believe my eyes: The castle I remembered so well is in ruins. Hollow are the windows and empty the gates. Several of the buildings have vanished and the tower is gone; what happened?

We learned that Adolf Hitler bought the castle in 1941 from Prince Guenter of Schwarzburg and ordered it completely rebuilt to serve as a "Guest House of the Reich" for prominent foreign visitors. The events of World War II and the defeat of Germany not only interrupted the work but left the project forever unfinished.

What a sad, final chapter for a place that had been the residence of the same family for over 800 years!

Following the Schwarza river from Schwarzburg up stream for just a few kilometers we reach the tiny community of Obstfelderschmiede. The place is significant since it serves as the valley terminal for the famous Oberweissbach funicular railway.



Oberweissbach 50-Pfennig note of July 1, 1921, depicts the beginning of the world's steepest funicular to Lichtenhain, Cursdorf and Deesach. A blacksmith is shown at left.

It has no Notgeld of its own but is pictured on one of the 50-Pfennig notes of Oberweissbach. The note, showing a blacksmith at the left, shows the terminal with the tracks behind it as it still appears today.

The caption below translates "Board here for Oberweissbach, Lichtenhain, Cursdorf, Deesbach." Above the illustration it states "Oberweissbach funicular railway, the world's steepest railway."

It is worth noting that the Notgeld was issued during a time in 1921 when the funicular was still under construction, between 1919-1923. I struggled with the temptation to photograph or tape the scene, aware of the injunction of my companions not to risk the continuation of our trip.

We wished to go to Oberweissbach, though we could not ride the world's steepest rails since we had the automobile. The distance by road is three or four times longer than by rail.

Oberwissbach is the birthplace of educator and kindergarten founder Friedrich Froebel. His portrait appears on the back of the 25-Pfennig note of Oberweissbach. The house in which he was born is shown on the front at left; on the right is a picture of the "Froebel Tower," a look-out point not far from Oberweissbach, built in Froebel's honor in 1890.

From the tower we saw a broad expanse of the Thuringian forest, mountain ranges and beautiful valleys. Both the tower and the birth house are well cared for, appearing today as they do on the notes.

The Schwarza is a tributary of the Saale river. One of our excursions takes us along a stretch of the Saale valley. It is just as castle-studded, legendary and celebrated as the Rhine valley, though a bit more remote and not so much advertised.

Our all-day trip commences in Saalfeld, just a few minutes by car from Bad Blankenburg. Saalfeld (1125) has been called a "picture book in stone." Most famous among its several landmarks are the two round towers of the ruined castle named "Der Hohe Schwarm."

There are three different 1921 Notgeld issues of Saalfeld. One note of each set depicts this somewhat obscure castle. Historians don't know exactly when it was built.

The marvelous 16th century Rathaus is another landmark appearing three times on Saalfeld's Notgeld and the Renaissance castle "Kitzerstein" turns up twice. Each of these buildings was focused upon by the Camcorder, as I tried to utilize the little time available, including the castles, the famous St. Johannis church, 16th century town houses, gate towers and bridges.

All of the structures have been depicted on Saalfeld's Notgeld. As I was taping I anticipated comparing the structures on my tapes with my Notgeld collection in Minnesota on long winter evenings.

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Continued from Page Two **Oberammergau**

Medals in white metal are known to commemorate the Passion Play of Oberammergau; in 1910, 1922 and 1934, Karl Goetz designed medals marking the play.

Paper Notgeld of Oberammergau of 25, 50 and 75-Pfennig values comes with four date series: July 1, 1921; July 1, 1921 to Oct. 1, 1922; July 1, 1921 to one month after recall; and July 1, 1921 to Oct. 1, 1922, bearing a color date 1921.

Issued by the Gemeinde of Oberammergau were five, 10, 25 and 50-Pfennig notes, undated. From Oct. 1, 1923, are denominations 500 Millionen, and one, five, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 Milliarden.

Niederwiesa (1914) 1 Mark $3.50
Nienburg/Weser ND (1920) 25, 50 Pf $2.50*
Noerdlingen Oct. 2, 1917 50 Pf K-1923aIII $.50*
Noerdlingen Dec. 1, 1920 50 (3) Pf L-951cI $3*
Noerenberg/Pommern May 11, 1920 5, 10, 50 Pf K-1924fI $1.50*
Noerenberg/Pommern Nov. 8, 1921 50 (4) Pf L-952h $5*
Noeschenroede March 15, 1921 25, 50 Pf L-940cIII $1.25*
Norddorf/Amrum ND 75 Pf, 1 Mark L-954 $2*
Norden 50 Pf April 7, 1919; 25 Pf, Jan. 6, 1921 $1.25*
Nordenham May 15, 1921 50 Pf L-955bI $1.50*
Nordhausen Oct. 28,1919 25, 50 Pf $1.50*
Nordhausen/Harz May 1, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf L-948 $3*
Norddorf/Amrun ND 75 Pf, 1 Mark $2*
Nortorf May 10, 1920 50 Pf L-950aI Windmill $2*
Oberammergau July 1, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf L-965b $1.75*
Oberammergau July 1, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf L-965c $1.75*
Oberglogau/Silesien July 1, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf Plebiscite L-967 $1.75*
Oberlind S-M 1921 50 (2) Pf L-972 $2*
Ober Salzbrunn/Silesien 1921 50 (5) Set L-973 $3.50*
Oberweissbach-Cursdorf-Deesbach-Lichtenhain July 1, 1921 L-975 $.75*
Oelde/Westfalen July 1, 1921 5 Mark L-979 $1.25*
Oels/Schlesien March 1, 1921, 10 Pf; ND 25, 50, 75, 100 Pf Set L-980 $4.50*
Bad Oeynhusen ND 50 Pf, 1 Mark L-982 $4.25*
Ohrdruf March 1, 1921 50 (6) Pf L-989b $3.25*
Oldenburg/Holstein April 1, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf, 1 Mark L-987 $4*
Oldenburg/Holstein to Jan. 1, 1922 50 Pf, 1 Mark L-987c $3*
Oldenburg/Oldenburg Dec. 1, 1918 10, 25 Pf K-1983 $2.50*
Oldenburg/Oldenburg 1921 50 (6) Pf set Leader dogs for blind L-988 $6*
Oldenburg/Oldenburg 1921 50 Pf L-989 $.50*
Oldenburg/Oldenburg May 21-31, 1922 1, 2 Mark L-990 $4.25*
Oldisleben/Kyffhauser Aug. 5, 1921 50 (5) Pf L-994 $2.75*
Olpe/Westfalen ND 50 Pf P-S 1985 Red serial Nr, 3.5 mm $1.25*
Oppurg Aug. 1, 1921 25, 50 (2), 75 Pf L-995 $2*
Orlamuende/Thuer. Sept 2, 1920 5, 10, 25 Pf $1.75*
Orsoy May 1, 1921 25, 50 Pf L-998 $2*
Oschersleben/Baden March 1, 1921 5 Pf L-1000 $1*
Osnabrueck May 1, 1917 25, 50 Pf P-S 1998 $1.25*
Osnabrueck July 1921 5, 10, 25, 50 (6), 75 Pf $5*
Osterfeld/Westfalen Dec. 15, 1921 25 (3), 50 (3), 75 (3), 100 Pf Max Bechstein $8
Osterholz April 11, 1921 25 Pf $.50*
Osterholz Jan. 7, 1921 10 Pf $.75*
Osterholz May 31, 1921 10, 25, 50 Pf $1.50*

Osterode/Harz to Jan. 1, 1922 10, 50 Pf L-1008 $5.25*
Osterwieck/Harz Jan. 1, 1921 25, 50 Pf L-1009 $1*
Ostheim/Rhoen Nov. 1, 1918 10, 50 Pf P-S 2005g $2*
Ottendorf/Schlesien Sept. 14, 1921 25, 75 Pf, 1 Mark L-1010 $5
Ottendorf/Elbe May 1920 25, 50 Pf L-1011 $2.25*
Paderborn March 1, 1920 10, 25, 50 Pf P-S 2014 $2.50*
Paderborn July 31, 1921 50 (4) Pf, 1 Mark Evangelische Kirchenkasse L-1014 $8
Paderborn Nov. 10, 1921 50, 75 Pf, 1, 2 Mark L-1015a $2*
Paderborn Nov. 10, 1921 50 (4) Pf L-1015b $2*
Paderborn Nov. 10, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf, 1 Mark L-1015c $2*
Paderborn Nov. 10, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf, 1, 2 Mark black L-1015d $2.25*
Paderborn Nov. 10, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf, 1, 2 Mark black L-1015e $2.50*
Paderborn Nov. 10, 1921 50, 75 PF, 1 Mark brown L-1015f $1.50*
Paderborn Nov. 10, 1921 25, 50, 75 Pf, 1 Mark brown L-1015g $2*
Papenburg Nov. 114, 1921 50, 75 Pf L-1016 $2*
Parchim Oct. 1, 1921 50 Pf P-S 2019f $.75*
Parey/Elbe to April 1, 1922 50 Pf L-1018c $1.50*
Pasewalk Oct. 1, 1921 50 Pf L-1021 50 Pf $3
Pasing ND (1920) 2 Pf K-2673c $.50*
Pasing Sept. 1, 1918 10 (2) Pf A & B K-2673 $1*
Pasing Sept. 1, 1918 25 Pf L-1022 with printing firm $7.50*
Passau ND 1, 2, 3 Pf P-S 2022 $1.50*
Passau ND 5, 10, 20 Pf $2*
Passau June 1918 50 Pf K-2674 Heinz Schietzl $.50*
Passau Oct. 1918 5 Mark K-380 $3
Passau June 1921 1 Mark L-1023 III $1.50*
Passau Oct. 25, 1923 10 Milliarden Mark K-4243p $2.50
Passau Oct. 25, 1923 100 Milliarden Mark K-4243p $2.50
Patschkau/Schlesien 1921 10, 25,50, 75 Pf L-1024a $2.25*
Paulinzella to March 31, 1922 25 (2), 50 (3) Pf L-1025 I $3*
Penkum May 1, 1921 50 Pf L-1026 $1*
Penzberg April 5, 1917 5, 10 Pf $1.50*
Pfarrkirchen Nov. 8, 1918 10 Mark K-383 $3.50
Pfarrkirchen ND 25, 50 Pf P-S 2035 $4*
Pfullendorf Oct. 3, 1917 50 Pf P-S 2040 $1*
Philippsthal/Werra Oct. 1, 1921 1 Mark (3) L-1030 $3.25*
Pirna to Dec. 31, 1918 10 Pf Reihe 1305, Ausgabe 0 K-2702a $1
Plathe ND 10, 25 Pf 1 Mark L-1031 $3
Pforzheim July 1, 1920 50 Pf K-2695d $1.50*

*Uncirculated
K-Keller catalogs; L-Lindman catalog; P-S Pick-Siemsen
Since the March 1990 Pricelist catalog numbers and values have been based on the second edition of the Lindman book
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