

The following is translated from:

Familienbuch  
der katholischen Pfarrgemeinde  
**Stephansfeld / Banat**  
1796-1945  
Vorfahren und Nachfahren  
von  
**Hans Awender**  
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Translated by Henry Fischer, November, 2012

**Foreword**

My grandfather, father and uncle occupied themselves with genealogical research. Rather unfortunately their data and sources have been lost. In the following years I took on the task of researching the families of Stefansfeld. It was customary in Stefansfeld for families to record dates with regard to their families in the family missal or prayer book. The inscriptions on tombstones in the cemetery were also a rich source of information. Some people in Stefansfeld were able to have family trees done professionally. I was able to make full use the following Stefansfeld church records and registers: birth records from 12.10.1797 to 29.08.1852 and from 02.01.1918 to 29.08.1942 and the birth register from 12.10.1797 to 27.12.1889.

In the birth register the family names of the parents of the children are missing. Only the first names of the parents are given. Because so many of the first names were Nikolaus and Maria, as well as others, it created a serious problem figuring things out for several families so that the reconciliation of the missing family names and the dates of the children's births from 1889 to 1918 was not possible. I was able to restore a portion of the births from 1889 to 1918 and the deaths after 1942 through personal contact with many people from Stefansfeld in order to connect them with their forebears. I was able to carry out my research with regard to the ancestors of the families of Stefansfeld that were transmitted to me by family genealogists as well as local genealogical books and studies. The completion of this project is due to the many supplementary resources and family data provided by families from Stefansfeld and the AKdFF in Sindelfingen for which I am truly thankful.

The marriage and death records follow:

There is data from 13.02.1798 to 04.06.1852 and from 07.01.1918 to 19.08.1942. The marriage register covers the period from 1798 to 1943 with only the year of the marriage until 1945.

Divorces are not recorded in the church records. Often in cases of widows the family name of her former husband is given, while at other times her maiden name is given. In most cases the recorder of the information writes under the influence of current Hungarian or Serbian usage resulting in many variations and spelling of family names. For example, in terms of my own family name, I have found eleven different variations. For that reason I provide two spellings for many of the family names that were difficult to decipher or were illegible in the church records or are transcription errors on my part. For that reason I am grateful to genealogical researchers and my fellow countrymen for their information or supplemental material with regard to the dates associated with their families. I have spent most of my spare time these past years working on the Stefansfeld Family Book. I thank my wife and our entire family for their very great understanding in all of this from the bottom of my heart. The Stefansfeld Family Book will also assist other family researchers associated with other nearby communities in their work. Today the former inhabitants of Stefansfeld are scattered all over the world. This book is intended to provide a backward glance to get a picture of our ancestors in our old Danube Swabian homeland for all of the people of Stefansfeld and their descendants binding them to their past in the new homelands in which they now live. For that reason this book should be in the possession of everyone who once lived in Stefansfeld.

Salzburg, Austria, 1998, Hans Awender

### **A Short History of Stefansfeld in the Banat**

In 1782 the third phase of the "Great Swabian Migration" under the sponsorship of Joseph II got under way. The settlers came from Lorraine, Alsace, Trier, the Palatinate, the Black Forest, the Breisgau, Luxembourg, Swabia, Baden, Tirol, Steiermark, Upper Austria and the Burgenland.

In 1796 the Chancellery Office of the Cathedral Chapter of Agram (Zagreb) located in Modosch acted on the Bishopric's behalf as the landlord of their estates that they desired to develop economically. This included the prairie and plains of Schuplai and Oregy where they hoped to establish a colony for that purpose. As a result settlers were recruited in Uj-Pecs (Ulnibach), Grabatz, Lenauheim and other German settlements in the Banat to carry out this aim.

After the harvest of 1797 the church was consecrated on August 20th, the Feast Day of St. Stephen the Apostolic King of Hungary (997-1028) with great fanfare and solemnity. The high point of the celebration was the naming of the settlement: Stefansfeld. The church records from 1797 to 1799 identify the names of the original 75 settler families. The parish was officially established on October 1st. The first priest to serve the parish was Adalbert Mocherle, who at the time was also responsible for the parish of Sartscha and the Vida Puszta and Oregyi.

The first confirmations in Stefansfeld took place in 1804. Bishop Ladislaus Koszeghy confirmed sixteen persons at that time.

In 1805 the population of Stefansfeld reached a total of 200 families. On September 6th the community was granted the right to hold a market.

From 1806 to 1809 the church in Stefansfeld was constructed by the diocese of Agram. The first permanent resident priest to serve the parish was Adalbert Mocherle followed by Domitrius Kossuth. A new school was also built at that time.

In 1807, the teacher, Johann Herzog, taught 224 children.

In 1811 there were 972 Roman Catholics in the community.

On March 20, 1812 the community was awarded the privilege of holding a weekly market.

By 1823 there were 1,612 German inhabitants in Stefansfeld and there were two teachers who instructed 292 children.

In 1827 there were 2,050 inhabitants in Stefansfeld.

The contract and agreement between the Cathedral Chapter and the community was renewed for an additional ten years in 1829.

In 1835, the teacher, Horvath, taught 197 pupils and Kettner taught 97.

In 1836 cholera raged.

In 1837 there were 2,025 inhabitants.

The entire village was flooded in 1842. A new cemetery had to be laid on higher ground.

In 1848 Stefansfeld was re-assigned to the St. George District of Gross Betschkerek Regional Court Circuit on May 30th. Since its founding Stefansfeld had belonged to the Ujpetsch Court Circuit. On August 29th the village became the site of a battle between the Hungarian National Guard and the Serbs. The Serbs were victorious.

Once again in 1849 many inhabitants became victims of cholera. In that year there were 149 baptisms and 197 deaths. Massive waves of locusts destroyed the crops and famine resulted. Until 1861, the three counties that made up the Banat plus the Batschka were formed into an important Austrian Crown Land with German as its administrative language. With the end of the war, the *robot*, (compulsory free labour for the landlord) and tithes on crops were re-introduced.

In 1853 Stefansfeld was part of the Royal and Imperial District of Modosch until 1861.

In 1854 the community had 2,287 residents. The total land under cultivation plus pasture consisted of 4,099 Joch.

In 1856 their contract agreement had run its course and was not renewed. On March 12, 1857 the landlord's office in Modosch issued a declaration with regard to its landholdings during the 30 year life span of the contract which included 192 Joch of gardens, 192 Joch of vineyards, 336 Joch of wheat fields, 1,000 Joch of corn, 500 Joch of untilled land, 2,300 Joch of stubble = a total of 4,520 Joch. The community was in store for four decades of bad times. The capital to help finance the local economy was provided by two Jews: Schleier and Reich who offered the farmers contracts in which they received one half of the crops and produce but did not include the house lots and vineyards. Through good organization on their part half of the village crops were delivered to their granary in the southern part of the village. The inhabitants referred to it as "the Jew's garden." Several of the farmers who did not want to share half of their crops said that if they could not have their crops for themselves in Stefansfeld they would buy land in a neighbouring community.

1858 proved to be a good year. There were 181 births and 64 deaths. There were 2,371 Roman Catholics, 15 Eastern Orthodox, 1 Lutheran, 2 Reformed and 9 Jews, totalling a population of 2,399 persons.

In 1860 Mrs. Anna Schunk and Barbara Dekrell served as mid-wives.

In 1861 to 1872 the community belonged to the Gross Betschkerek District.

In 1862 the two Jews, Schleier and Reich, were executed in Arad for their smuggling activities. Their capital and property were confiscated by the authorities.

There was great hunger in 1863 as a result of a severe drought.

News came to the village in 1864 that the Banat Military Frontier District government sought to settle the dry lands along the Danube River at Pantschowa. In response 300 families from Stefansfeld gave notice that they were prepared to migrate there.

By 1865 the inhabitants of Stefansfeld had laid out 186 Joch of vineyard. The area where they were located was named St. Urbanus, the patron saint of wine by the local inhabitants.

On October 13, 1868 the establishment of seven new villages was fostered by the Imperial government. The first had only 100 settler families and was named Königsdorf after Mr. König the chief representative of the Military Frontier District at the Imperial War Office. There were 28 recognized tradesmen among the settlers.

In 1869 Königsdorf was flooded and destroyed by the rampaging Danube River. The settlers returned to their home villages. The census this year indicates that there were 353 houses and 2,329 inhabitants in Stefansfeld.

In 1872 Stefansfeld was annexed to the Modosch District and had a post office.

In 1875, the local *Richter* (elected head of the Community Council), Mathias Milles was able to convince the Cathedral Chapter in Agram to cede the house lots and fields to the settlers.

In 1876 Stefansfeld achieved the status of a small town. Anton Merle bought the first 13 row threshing machine and a corn chucker.

In 1877 the first binder was purchased by Anton Merle, Josef Kadi and Josef Riss to bind the field crops.

In 1878 the total acreage belonging to the community consisted of 4,415 Joch of cultivated fields, 128 Joch of gardens, 385 Joch of meadows, 61 Joch of vineyards. The Cathedral Chapter in Agram owned 4,695 Joch.

In 1880 the rather barbaric name of Istvanföld was forced on the village and in 1911 it officially became Istvánfölda. Following the flooding of Königsdorf the settlers there returned home to Stefansfeld. Twenty-five families moved on to Ujvar where they were given a house lot and 6 1/2 Joch of cultivated land.

In 1881 the cultivation of silk worms was introduced.

In 1882, the share-cropper, who was also *Richter*, George Lefrank, along with two other community representatives were sent to Agram to negotiate a new contract with the Cathedral Chapter. The officials listened attentively and promised to meet the requests of the settlers. They also wanted to know more about the local village leaders in Stefansfeld and gave Lefrank their full attention. The pretence and trickery of the authorities soon became obvious. On their arrival back home everything was shared with the villagers at a meeting in the town hall. Fourteen days later the villagers were in for it! The *Richter* was ordered to return and report to the Cathedral Chapter where he was faced with two alternatives: recant all of the demands of the settlers or be driven out of his house and property. Lefrank stuck to his principles. The authorities made a beggar out of him. On two more occasions he sought an audience with the officials in Agram but received no reply. Deeply depressed he committed suicide.

In 1883 currency was flowing and a savings bank was founded in the village.

In 1884 the first electric street lights in Europe were installed in Temesvár.

In 1885 Lazar Dundjerski signed a twelve year agreement for all of the landholdings of the Cathedral Chapter in Agram. Many inhabitants in Stefansfeld abandoned their houses and sought work elsewhere.

On December 28, 1888 a volunteer fire department came into existence. The Commander: Franz Demko. Assistant Commander: Georg Bohn. Treasurer: Nikolaus Jost. Secretary: Franz Kriegelstein. First Section Commander: Heinrich Biebel. Deputy Commander: Peter Dewald. Second Section Commander: Michael Krämer and his deputy: Johann Merle.

In 1890 there were 2,525 inhabitants. Simon Rewitzer along with about 60 farmers bought the Pelrowitsch acreage in Serbian Itebe (around 600 Joch).

In 1895 Josef Schwemmer from Sartscha drilled four wells. The most water producing wells reached depths of 58 to 75 metres. The first steam driven threshing machine was purchased.

A new community centre (town hall) was built in 1896. The Istvánföld Savings and Loan Bank was founded. The leading director was Johann Awender. Supervisory Member of the Board was Peter Weber. Chairman: Anton Schmidt. Secretary: Nikolaus Awender, Eduard Walder and Adam Werth. Bookkeeper: Karl Schira. Treasurer: Heinrich Ludwig. A literary association was also established chaired by the priest, Ludwig Mihalkovits. Later a men's choir was formed chaired by Josef Wehner and Wenzel Hainka was the choir director. The 100th anniversary of the community of Stefansfeld was celebrated on August 20th under the direction of the community notary Karl Schira and the *Richter* Adam Werth. Through the laying down of a telephone line connection with Modosch our community was connected with the whole wide world.

In 1898 the contracted agreement with the Cathedral Chapter was renewed.

On May 19, 1901 the Istvánfölda Credit Union was founded. The chairman was Matthias Dekorsy. Vice-President was Nikolaus Hinding. It was one of the healthiest years with 103 births and 56 deaths.

The local branch of the Agricultural Workers Union was formed in 1904 with Jakob Awender the President. Anton Schmidt was Secretary and Nikolaus Steinfelder the Treasurer. During this year the 146 silkworm operations produced 2,472 kilograms of cocoons valued at 4,478 Krona. Thirty-five persons emigrated to America. Johann Awender Sr. and a number of farmers bought 480 Joch of Miksa Duschnitz's domain the so-called Nyagra Puszta.

In 1905 Adam Werth along with a group of farmers purchased the "small Wida" or "Walach (Romanian) Puszta" consisting of 630 Joch of cultivated fields at 400 Gulden per Joch. In the same year Josef Steinscufzer along with Blasius Schweiger, Heinrich Benz and Sebastian König were successful in purchasing the Kenderesch Puszta with its 480 Joch of cultivated fields.

In 1906 there were 2,501 inhabitants in Stefansfeld and 54 tradesmen.

In 1908 a stone road between Modosch and Stefansfeld was constructed by the engineer Bauer who came from Gross Betschkerek.

In 1909 the village received ownership of all of its land amortized over fifty years. By 1920 the inhabitants had paid it off. The Park Association was founded. President was George Reichert; Secretary was Nikolaus Hendl; Treasurer was Stefan Harle. The local Agricultural Association became affiliated with the Torontal County Association. The President was Anton Schmidt; Vice-President was Karl Werneth; Secretary was Nikolaus Hendl and Treasurer was Peter Kreis.

In 1910 there were 2,683 inhabitants who could both read and write.

On December 14, 1911 a Memorial Society was formed in the village. President was George Dekorsy; Vice-President was Karl Werneth; Secretary was Sebastian Jakob; Treasurer was George Reichert.

From 1912 to 1915 Dr. Josef Lenhard practiced medicine here.

In 1913 a local militia unit was formed. President: Nikolaus Jost. Vice-President Georg Dekorsy. Treasurer: Jakob Brunner. Captain: Dr. Josef Lenhard. Second Lieutenant: Nikolaus Schmidt. Adjutant Lieutenant: Julius Szabo. Lieutenants: Nikolaus Hassingler and Josef Blaumüller. Cadets: Nikolaus Degrell and Georg Frisch. Flag bearer: Heinrich Bertich.

On June 1, 1914 the first apothecary (drug store) was opened by Mrs. Ilona Halmos. The heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo on June 25th. The assassin was a Serbian student named Gavrilo Princip. The First World War broke out on July 28th.

In 1916 the two largest bells were confiscated for the war effort.

In September 1918 the village of Stefansfeld was occupied by Serbian troops. The war ended in November. The Dual Monarchy was defeated and Austria-Hungary was dismembered.

In 1919 the community was annexed by the Alibunar District. In July the local branch of Cultural Union was founded. The Board of Directors were Dr. Josef Lenhard, Johann Awender Jr., Matthias Awender (Secretary), Nikolaus Bohn Jr. (Treasurer) and Adam Andres (Bookkeeper). On April 11th the activities of the Cultural Union got underway and the organization was formally recognized later in January.

In 1920, following the formal Peace Conference of Trianon, the Banat Crown Land was divided into three parts on June 4th. The territory taken over by the Serbs took on the designation: Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The German Swabian Cultural Association led by Dr. George Grassl was officially recognized and began representing

the Germans of Yugoslavia. George Reichert and Johann Awender were the local leaders of the branch association founded on September 19th.

According to the census of 1921 there were 631 houses and 2,876 inhabitants, comprised of 2,763 Germans, 64 Hungarians, 28 Romanians, 3 Serbs, and 18 others living in Stefansfeld.

In 1922 the name of the community was changed to Supljaja.

In 1923 Adam Werth (house 215?), Adam Werth (house 100) and George Rewitzer constructed and operated a brickyard.

In 1924, under the leadership of the *Richter* Josef Schweiger, the community bought two new bells. Participating in the dedication of the bells were the major donors, Nikolaus Kuwi and Eva Schweiger neé Haupt as well as Josef Ziwey and Gertrude Brück neé Rettinger and the Roman Catholic priest from the newly created Setschan Deaconate of the Gross Betschkerek Apostolic Vicariate.

An agricultural co-operative was founded in 1925. The President was Nikolaus Bohn; Secretary was Nikolaus Kleinfelder. The "Agraria" as it was known was officially established in June with Johann Awender Jr. as the head of the Board of Directors and Josef Ziwev as his deputy and Nikolaus Bohn as bookkeeper and Johann Ziwey treasurer.

By 1926 there were already two mobile steam driven threshing machines.

On August 23, 1927 the Community Council approved the construction of a new town hall. On October 24th the Council authorized the introduction of electric lighting. The machinist, Franz Müller, undertook the electrification with 130 outlets and 800 light bulbs. Dr. Hans Giel and Dr. Hella Giel were in private practice. On August 22nd the Community Council permitted Karl Zwick to open an apothecary shop. Peter Weber the parish priest in Kudritz was assigned to Stefansfeld. He was born in Gross Kikinda on April 24, 1864 and ordained in 1907. An agricultural school was opened on October 27th with one teacher on staff. On November 6th all of the local officials were elected by secret ballot for the first time. Elected were Nikolaus Dekrell as *Richter*, his assistant George Wagner, notary for life, Peter Miksic, treasurer was George Bohn, Trustee for orphans was Nikolaus Bohn. Council members: Johann Bohn, Johann Ziwey, Johann Jung and Nikolaus Lambert.

In 1928 the teachers: Anton Schmidt, Josef Kleinfelder and Nikolaus Jost passed the proficiency test in the use of the Serbian language and were qualified to teach. On December 18th a youth group was founded. The purchase of 1,100 Joch of the landholdings of the Recci family domains within the Sartscha boundary was carried out by the farmers of Stefansfeld. The price of a Joch was 80 measures of wheat and an additional 15 measures in interest payable in 5 years. The world economic crisis and the price of wheat created havoc for many a brave farmer.



On February 23, 1930 the parish assumed patronage for all of its affairs and provided a yearly stipend for the priest: 100 measures of wheat, 50 measures of corn, one wagon load of firewood, 5 Joch of cultivated fields, plus retention of all the fees for baptisms, marriages, etc. Archbishop Rafael Rodic celebrated the sacrament of confirmation on May 26th. At the end of June, Nikolaus Schütz was appointed the parish priest. He was born in Bogarosch on September 27, 1868 and ordained a priest in 1892.

The results of the 1931 census: 655 houses, 2,808 inhabitants and according to language spoken in Stefansfeld: 2,635 Germans, 77 Hungarians, 30 Romanians, 28 Gypsies, 22 Serbs, 12 Croats, 3 Russians and 1 Slovene. According to religion: 2,720 Roman Catholics, 60 Serbian Orthodox and 28 Reformed. The livestock: 1,206 horses, 857 cattle, 1,839 hogs, 184 sheep, 17 goats, 52 beehives, 13 turkeys, 515 geese, 460 ducks, 18,500 chickens. The village boundaries included 3,118 hectares of cultivated land, 4.74 hectares of vineyard, 27.78 hectares of meadows. Totalling 3,292 hectares. The total state tax was 822.083 Dinars.

In 1932 a local branch of the Yugoslavian Nationalist Party was formed. A Horse Breeders' Association was formed on May 20th. Heinrich Werneth was the president, Peter Wagner was his deputy and Matthias Awender was the treasurer and Jakob Sabath the secretary.

In 1935 the Yugoslavian People's Party was established. There were 237 pupils receiving instruction in the local public school from grades one to six. The farmers bought 7,000 Joch of land in neighbouring communities. Dr. Michael Müller was the local doctor.

In 1936 the volunteer fire department, the men's choir, the memorial society and the horse breeders associations all continued to exist. The parish priest, Johann Eusch reports on this in his history along with the teachers, Nikolaus Schütz and Nikolaus Jost, as well as Johann Awender. All of them were thanked for their efforts.

On September 1, 1939 the Second World War broke out.

On March 27, 1941 the Yugoslavian government was toppled by a military putsch. Under General Simowitsch the Communists gained the upper hand. [Editor's note: Although there was a military coup d'état on March 27, 1941, I could find no evidence of Communist involvement.] As a result Yugoslavia was drawn into the Second World War on April 6th. Approaching noon that day police arrived in our community to arrest the leading German citizens to hold as hostages. Because of the location of the village they were unsuccessful as German troops had already arrived and occupied the area and then the entire country. The first German troops arrived in our village on April 15th. [Editor's note: There appears to be some confusion with the timeline here. The German Army invaded on April 6. It is probable that they did not reach Stefansfeld for several days, likely on April 15, as noted above.] The name of our village immediately reverted back to Stefansfeld...but for the last time. An order arrived from Berlin instructing the Folk Group *Führer* Sepp Janko to establish the SS Division "Prince Eugene". The people of Stefansfeld were excited about being reunited with the German Reich but in the end it

would not bring about joy for them. What they would awake to after the Second World War was over was totally different from what they had experienced after the First World War. They would be expelled and liquated. On May 11th, Johann Awender was mayor; his deputy mayor was Jakob Dekorsy. Treasurer was Anton Engler. Council members were Johann Lafleur, Adam Schenk and Nikolaus Ziwey.

Because the farmers in Stefansfeld did not have sufficient meadows they bought 500 Joch of hayfields in Schibowa by Schurjan in 1943 on a co-operative basis.

In 1944 there were 13 steam driven threshing machines, 208 wheat harvesting machines, 187 seeding machines, 71 corn harvesters, and other smaller equipment. The church bells were rung announcing air raids. The village church served as a house of worship for the inhabitants of Stefansfeld until October 1, 1944. It was plundered and looted by the Partisans. With the entry of the Russians into the village it was renamed Schupljaja. The Russians later left and the Partisans came and renamed or community once again and called it Krajisnik after Bosnian Krajina. The name exists to this day. On November 21st the Danube Swabian population of Stefansfeld were interned and stripped of all of their rights before the law on the basis of the AVNOY decree of Tito's Partisans. The German civilian population were placed in concentration camps where large numbers of them starved to death. The younger men were shot, others were imprisoned and some fled from the country. The adolescent girls and young women from 17 to 35 years of age were interned in slave labour camps in Krivoj Rog in Ukraine. The last church council consisted of Dr. Michael Lehmann, the parish priest, lay president was Jakob Binjung. The organist was Michael Tell. Secretary was Jakob Schweiger. The last sextons were Josef Jung and Josef Jost.

On May 8th, 1945 the German Reich capitulated ending the Second World War. The expulsion of the inhabitants of Stefansfeld began and they would be scattered all over the world. Wherever our industrious families were able to plant their roots once more they were able to rebuild their lives and fortunes.

In 1947 there were mass escapes of many surviving inhabitants of Stefansfeld from the extermination camps that made their way across Hungary to Austria and Germany.

In 1948 our church was detonated by the Partisans and the materials were taken to build houses. The concentration camps in the Banat went out of existence on March 24th.

On August 5, 1950 the Danube Swabians joined together in producing: *A Charter For Those Driven Out of Their Homelands*, in which it states: "We who have been expelled and driven from our Homeland renounce revenge and retaliation and seek to work for a united Europe in which all peoples can live without fear." The Charter was signed by Franz Hamm.

On March 30, 1952, Dr. Michael Lehmann, the last parish priest in Stefansfeld, founded the St. Michael's Assistance Society in Vienna.

The 200th anniversary of the founding of Stefansfeld was celebrated on May 25, 1996 in Tuttlingen/Möhringen. Since then other gatherings of former inhabitants of Stefansfeld and their descendants have also been held there.