

FEATURE

'Quite unbelievable' family reunion unites 850

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

What hath Daniel and Elizabeth Ehmann wrought?

Whereas some family reunions can be held in one room, the Ehmanns might take up an entire street. A reunion of epic proportions is taking place this week, as approximately 850 people — from Germany, Venezuela and 31 states including Alaska — are gathering in Rochester for a series of events.

All the reunion attendees have family ties to Daniel and Elizabeth (Pappon) Ehmann, who settled in the Rochester area in the early 1870s after emigrating from Germany.

"It's very gratifying, really, to see this turnout. People have rearranged their summers so they could come," said Father Richard Kinsky, CSB, one of the reunion co-organizers. "It's a celebration of our roots, our heritage."

"This is a wonderful opportunity to see, face-to-face, cousins I haven't really known. It kind of blows my mind that there's this many of us; it's quite unbelievable," added Sister Clare Ehmann, SSJ. She and Father Kinsky are great-grandchildren of Daniel and Elizabeth.

Reunion activities began Monday, July 31, with a tour of historical sites in Rochester. Other scheduled activities: a trip to Widmer Winery in Naples Aug. 1; Niagara Falls and other parts of Canada Aug. 2; Seneca Park Zoo as well as the gravesite of Daniel and Elizabeth Ehmann at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery Aug. 3; and a boat tour on Lake Ontario as well as an evening euchre tournament Aug. 4.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Heinz Schwartze, of Rödersheim, Germany, listens to a relative through a "Whisper Dish" — a parabolic dish that transmits sound — at the Rochester Museum and Science Center on East Avenue on July 31. Schwartze is one of 33 Germans who came to Rochester for the Ehmann family reunion.

Closing out the week will be a big family picnic at Aquinas Institute Aug. 5, followed by a Mass at St. Boniface Church Aug. 6 during the parish's regularly scheduled 10:30 a.m. Mass. The liturgy is open to the public — but with hundreds of Ehmann relatives due to attend, seating could be scarce.

Serving as concelebrants for the Sunday Mass will be Father Kinsky and Father Raymond Rother, pastor of St. Peter's Parish in

Hochdorf, Germany, where many Ehmann descendants are parishioners. The priests also hope to be joined by Father Benedict Ehmann, one of four surviving grandchildren of Daniel and Elizabeth. At 95 years old, Father Ehmann — who resides at the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary — is currently the oldest priest of the Rochester Diocese.

Father Kinsky noted that the idea for this reunion began three years ago, when he and 35 cousins traveled to Hochdorf for a

smaller-scale reunion of 200 — not that such a number is exactly dinky.

Thirty-three family members were due to come from Germany for this week's festivities. Many, Father Kinsky observed, had never been on a plane.

"Most of them have been pretty well homebound," said Father Kinsky, who serves as sacramental minister at St. Joseph's Church in Rush.

Prior to the reunion, Sister Clare Ehmann said, she had never paid much attention to her family history. "This has really kind of got me going," said the nun, who ministers at St. Martin's Place in Rochester.

Father Kinsky said that he began tracing the Ehmann family history approximately 10 years ago. He said the information was helpful when announcements for this week's reunion were sent out.

"We did a pretty good job, although there's still a few we'll never find. But I think 95 percent got the mailing," the Basilian priest said.

Everybody on the mailing list has a family link with Daniel and Elizabeth Ehmann, who left Hochdorf in 1871 for the United States. They brought their eight children by ship to New York City; one died en route. The Ehmanns settled in Groveland, Livingston County, where five more children were born.

The family later moved to a farm in Gates, and several Ehmann sons eventually became involved in a family meat-market operation. Father Kinsky noted that large groups of Ehmann descendants have been members of Holy Ghost Parish in Gates, as well as Holy Family and St. Boniface in Rochester.

Regional center provides multi-programs for Tioga adults

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

In recent months, Ruth Sandusky and her husband, John, have attended Bible study at Waverly's St. James Church and eucharistic minister/lector workshops at Catatonk's St. Francis of Assisi Church.

Yet Ruth said they wouldn't have pursued those events if they had been held much farther from the Sanduskys' parish, St. Pius X in Van Etten. The church is located in Chemung County, near the Tioga County border.

"We wouldn't drive to Rochester for a 7 o'clock meeting. There's just no way," she stated.

Although there are many opportunities for adult education and training in the diocese, "Rochester is the site for most of them," commented Barbara Classen, director of the Tioga Regional Center.

The center, which opened in September 1999, offers adult faith formation and leadership training programs for a six-church area in the diocese's southeast corner.

Those churches are St. James, St. Francis and St. Pius X, along with St. Patrick's, Owego; St. John the Evangelist, Newark Valley; and St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin. All except St. Pius X are in Tioga County. The parishes make up the Tioga pastoral planning group and are commonly referred to as "SOS" (Strength of Six).

Classen is stationed at St. Patrick's. Other than her office, there is no physical "regional center." Instead, Classen travels to the parishes to conduct her programs.

"People are still learning about the Tioga Center and what it does. So it's more effective going to where they are, rather than sitting back and letting them come to us," Classen explained.

The center is funded by diocesan grant money, an annual raffle and a small percentage of the regional parishes' weekly collection.

Much of the center's offerings, Classen said, are focused on two sets of adults: those in pastoral care, such as parish staff

members; and volunteers, such as parish councils and committees. And some events, such as Scripture study, are available for the general populace.

Classen has spent her first year primarily establishing programs and raising awareness throughout the region. "She's been very visible to all of us. She's doing a wonderful job," Ruth Sandusky said.

Sandusky remarked that the workshop for eucharistic ministers in Catatonk helped her "get ready as a person to present the Eucharist to the people, instead of just going to them and saying 'The blood of Christ' or 'The body of Christ.'"

Also, last spring Father George Heyman led a series of Bible-study sessions, and Classen coordinated a leadership day touching upon such issues as people understanding their roles as leaders, and honing communication and listening skills.

At the present, Classen said, "We're doing quite an intense effort on catechist certification."

The center is gearing up for a big event Sept. 22-23, "Reclaiming Women's Spirituality," featuring Edwina Gately, nationally noted activist and theologian. On Nov. 3, the center will mark its first anniversary with an elaborate musical celebration.

Along with these events, Classen said she hopes the future will bring establishment of a facility to provide meeting space and a resource library.

Classen is also encouraging parishioners to operate independently of her presence; for instance, six women from six churches are coordinating the Gately program in September.

"I don't envision good ministry as having a finger in every pie. Good ministry is always working yourself out of a job," Classen commented.

The idea for a regional center grew out of the pastoral planning process, as the Tioga group readied itself for having less priest support in upcoming years. Already the Owego, Newark Valley and Catatonk parishes are served by two priests, Fathers William Moorby and Timothy Niven, and

operate as a cluster. And the Waverly and Van Etten churches are served by one priest, Father Thomas Watts, who is due to retire in 2001.

"People need to be prepared," Classen remarked. "There is an increasing sense of responsibility of the laity in the life of the church."

At the same time, she said, this reality has not yet dawned on everyone.

"There's a group of folks who are enlightened and another who are completely befuddled," Classen said. "They can't imagine a world in which Father doesn't do everything."

In addition, Classen said, "They're not quite sure what it means to both a member of a parish and a region."

Gloria Masters, from St. John the Evangelist, has attended several events offered through Tioga Regional Center. She, also, hopes for greater involvement from the community.

"I know it's very important. There are a lot of people who could be involved, but haven't been," Masters said.

But the ball does seem to be rolling. Ruth Sandusky said that the programs in which she was a participant have been very well attended. Some of these adults, Classen said, have even come from Chemung and Tompkins counties, as well as neighboring communities that are located in the Syracuse and Scranton dioceses.

Jim Ross, from St. Patrick's in Owego, has attended programs in Newark Valley and Apalachin.

"It's kind of brought a broader community together," he said. "People realize there are a lot more Catholics in their region than their own parish."

Added Maribeth Mancini, diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis, who serves as a liaison to the center:

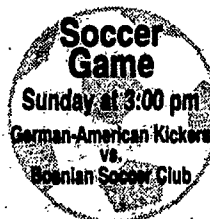
"It's a wonderful example of what cooperation among parishes can achieve."

German Fest

August 11-12-13

Friday 5:00 pm - 11:00 pm, Saturday 3:00 pm - 11:00 pm
Sunday Noon - 9:00 pm

Three day festival with German food & beverages. Entertainment includes music dancing, soccer game, children's games, cultural booths & prizes.



- Entertainment is continuous
- Featuring musical guests direct from Germany: Die Schwarzwald Stettholz Musikanten & Die Bregtal'a Vagabunden
- German-American history displays
- Kindergarten area with face painting & pony rides

Admission: \$4.00, includes FREE parking - handicap parking available
Children 11 & under FREE (when accompanied by an adult)German Cultural Center Grounds
Gates Memorial Park, 150 Spencerport Road (Route 31)