

ERMERSHAUSEN

A BOOK ABOUT A VILLAGE

District of Hofheim,
Region of Mainfranken.

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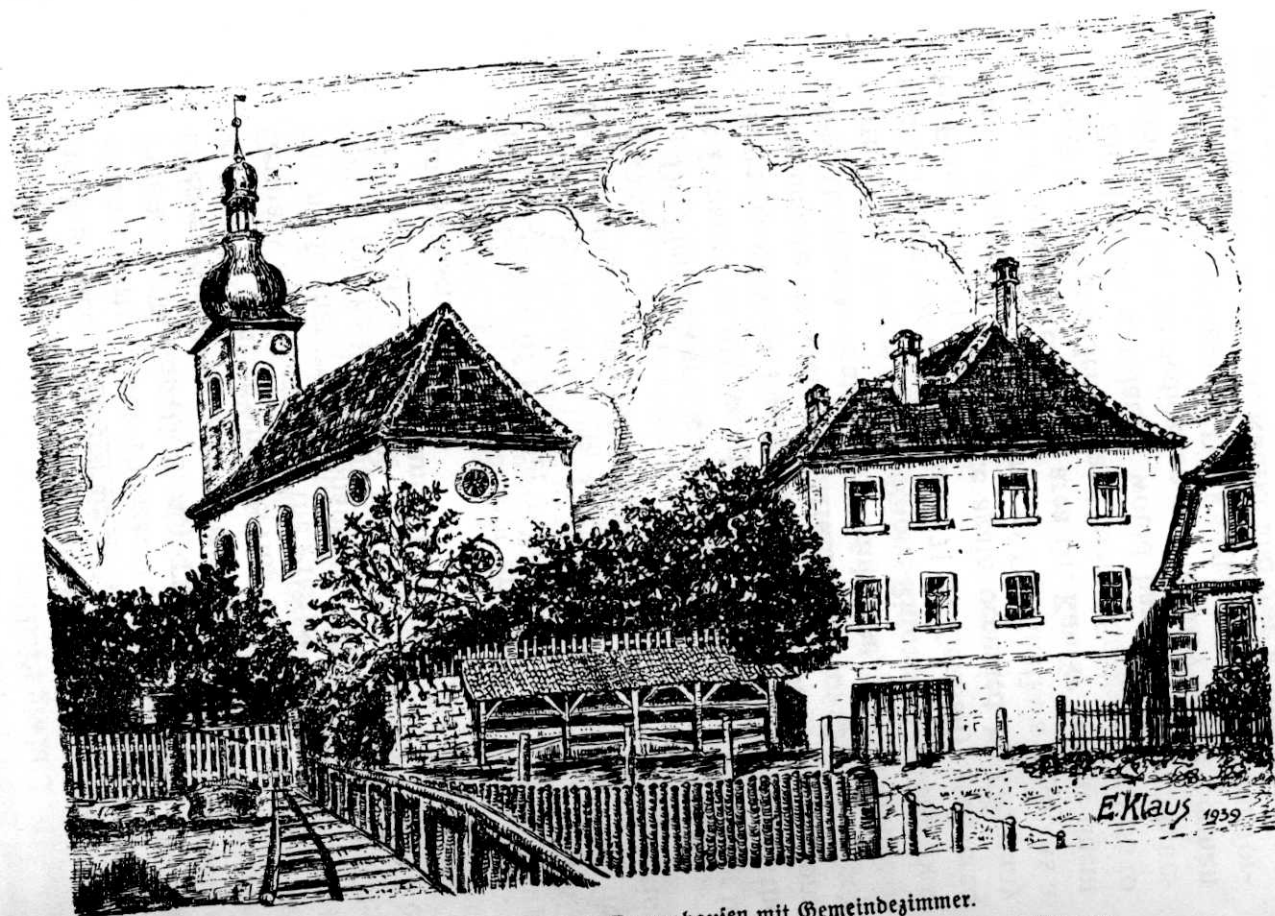
Edited by
Marguerite Pfeiffer Romond

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DEDICATED TO MY HOME VILLAGE



Dr. Ludwig Pfeiffer
1872—1952



Kirche und erste Schule in Ermershausen mit Gemeindegemach.
Ermershausen's Church and First School With Communal Room

ENGLISH PREFACE

This, the English translation of Dr. Ludwig Pfeiffer's book entitled "Ermershausen", is the result of the combined efforts of the Pfeiffer Family presently residing in Pensacola, Florida (U. S. A.). The original German text was discovered and brought to the attention of the family by Richard J. Pfeiffer while serving in the U.S. Army in West Germany and researching the Pfeiffer history. The decision was made that "Ermershausen" must be translated into English for the benefit of not only the Pfeiffer Family but for those other descendants of Germany and the village of Ermershausen.

Philip A. Pfeiffer, author and historian, and George "Bill" Pfeiffer of Pfeiffer Printing Company, Pensacola, Florida undertook the project with the enthusiasm, dedication, time and experience needed to make this printing possible.

Dr. Pierre Henri Georges Kaufke, assistant professor in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at the University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida, was commissioned to do the actual translation of Dr. Pfeiffer's work. Dr. Kaufke is a native of Mulhouse, a textile center of northeastern France on the Rhone-Rhine Canal. This particular region was annexed in 1871 by Germany, recovered by France in 1919 and once again occupied by Germany during World War II, the time of Dr. Kaufke's birth. As a result of being reared in this area Dr. Kaufke became fluent in both French and German and later in English. Needless to say this English translation would have been almost impossible but for the dedication and mastery of the German and English languages by Dr. Kaufke. We were most fortunate to have found Dr. Kaufke and owe a sincere "thank you" to John Scott Pfeiffer for bringing him into this project. Thanks to Marguerite Pfeiffer Romond for the fine

job of editing this English edition. Many thanks to Hermann Pfeiffer of Schweinfurt, West Germany, for the picture of his father Dr. Ludwig Pfeiffer.

The Pfeiffers of Pensacola, along with descendants of the many other German settlers of this city, are very fortunate in having this book preserved and translated into our present day language. The accounts of the customs, life and history of our forebearers and the village of Ermershausen can be more fully appreciated from this first hand documentation by Dr. Ludwig Pfeiffer, the nephew of George, Henry and John M. Pfeiffer all early settlers of Pensacola. The German descendants of other villages should benefit as much from this book in that life in such villages followed closely throughout all of Germany.

It should be pointed out to the reader of this historical account of the village of Ermershausen that Dr. Ludwig Pfeiffer, in the final chapter, wrote of the ideals, happenings and events that had just recently taken place, or were in the act of being achieved as he put his last words of this work on paper. One must remember that Adolf Hitler was at the pinnacle of his success at bringing Germany out of the depths of defeat in World War I and winning the loyalty of the German people. Therefore, as you read this last chapter, try to place yourself, mentally, in Ermershausen in the early spring of 1939. It would not be long before disastrous times would once again befall this lovely Bavarian village.

INTRODUCTION

Thinking about the winter evenings on which we children were told of the old times and of when life was "sweetest", brings back some of the fondest memories of my earliest childhood. From these days, already, stems my inclination to explore the past of our village. It stayed with me for my whole life and was kindled anew by the genealogical studies carried out now and then by pastor Erhard for various families of the village. This inclination, however, matured into the decision to gather whatever recollections of times past were still in the memory of the old folks of the village; as well as to thoroughly study the existing written sources in the Village Registry and in the archives of the castle of Birkenfeld; and to work them up into a book, only after the coming to power of Adolf Hitler had rekindled in our people an interest in the past; and after the request was issued by the Adult Education Program of the National Socialist Community "Kraft Durch Freude" [Strength through Joy] to summarize, in a village book, the past of the communities in a manner that was easily and readily understood by the general public.

So that the reader of this book may understand how the events in the village are related to those of German history, I thought it necessary to introduce the various individual sections concerned with history by a summary of the major events in the becoming of our people. In this matter, the reader of this village book will not only be re-acquainted with the most important events of German history; but also, the relationship of home and fatherland, as well as the interrelations of their destinies, will become clear to him.

As I had done with the past of the village, I thought it necessary to situate today's village within the framework of the countryside, especially its relationship to its surroundings near and far, and bring it to the attention of the villagers. Only he who has become acquainted with his home of today, of yesterday and of yesteryear knows the worth of his

homeland and is able to fully love and esteem it.

It is my deep desire to express my gratitude, at this place, to all who assisted me so obligingly in the making of this book: my dear mother who, with her more than 90 years of life, was able to give me first hand information about much that had taken place in the last century; my former, now deceased, old teacher, the honorable K. Handschuh who, through his conscientious entries in the Community Protocols during his almost 50 year tenure as village secretary, made valuable contributions; the present senior master of the village, Ernst Ruff, who always lent a willing hand to my research; and, most of all, the present mayor, Karl Bornkessel, who, from the very beginning, showed the most active interest in my task and who made possible the printing of this book; also the village secretary, Karl Verwind, who was helpful at all time. Special gratitude, however, goes to Technical Inspector of the Reich's Railways, engineer Ernst Klaus-Regenburg, also a son of our village, and to senior master and local squadron leader of the N.S.D.A.P., August Mayer-Birkenfeld, both of whom provided such nice illustrations for the book: the former — the two pictures and sketches, the latter — the drawings of the arms.

May now this village book find its way into the hands and the heart of each one of the community. The author, however, sends it on its way with the words inscribed on the large bell in the steeple, the oldest witness of the history of our village:

"May God Bless and Protect Ermershausen."

Schweinfurt, March 15th, 1939, the day on which Bohemia and Moravia were incorporated into Greater Germany.

Dr. Ludwig Pfeiffer.

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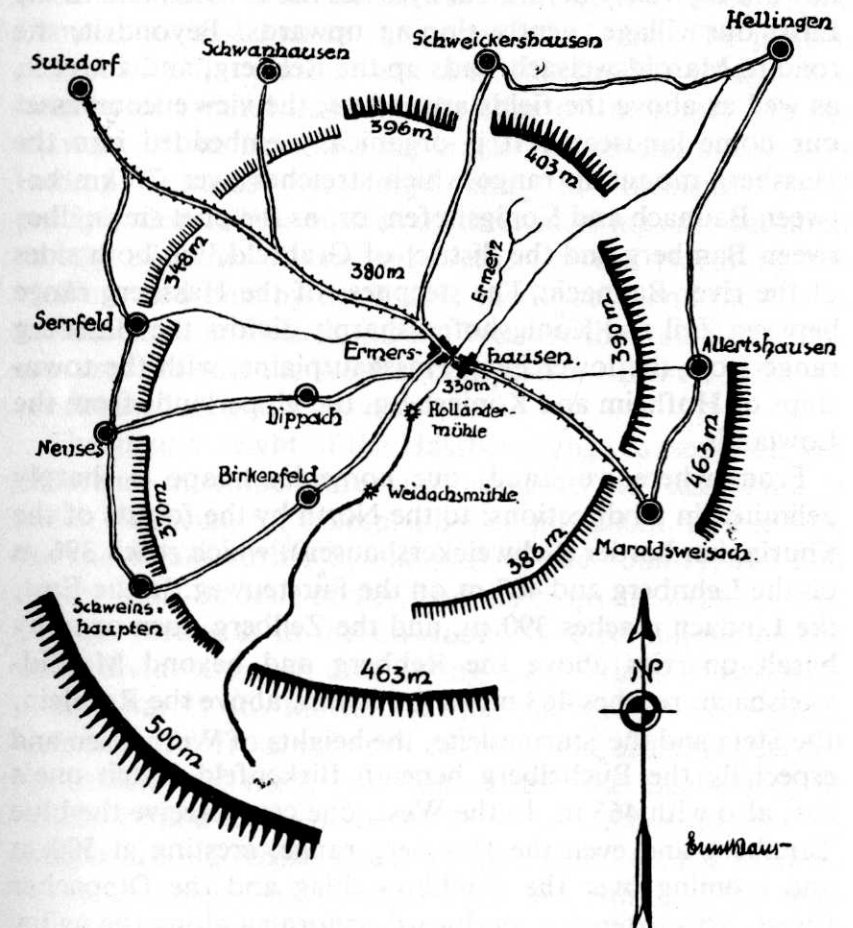
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I. OUR VILLAGE AND ITS INHABITANTS

1. THE GEOGRAPHY OF OUR HOMELAND



Die Lage unseres Dorfes.

The situation of our village.

cigarboxes were no longer large enough to hold the money of the peasants. Already in the fall of 1922, everything had increased by a thousandfold. The coffin for our father who died at that time cost 30,000 M. In the following year, it was a million and even a billionfold. My brother sold a pair of suckling pigs for 1,000 million, i.e., 1 billion marks. He was able to buy a ram for that money because he did so immediately. One week later, he would not have been able to acquire it for that price.

For a simple doctor's visit, Mrs. Imhofsbeck had to pay the proceeds from her two large fields on the Dippacher Hill. The people were unable as yet to comprehend the monstrous inflationary swindle. Only in November of 1923, when for one trillion marks of paper money only one gold mark was paid, their eyes opened up. Whoever was still in possession of the field he had bought with paper money could be glad; whoever had the money for it realized that he had been swindled. The revaluation determined by law after the fact provided only 12½% or one eighth. Furthermore, paper marks were revalued according to their date of printing. Headmaster Heinkel sold a hog for two million mark, took the money to the Savings Bank in Heldburg and received the higher valuation of three marks. Also, the almost ¾ million mark of war loans were revaluated in the same manner. And the Ermershauser loan office was one of the few associations which were able to reappraise their holdings to that extent.

One felt ignominiously swindled by the state to which one had remitted one's good money in good faith and trust. The government of the period between the Reichs enjoyed no more trust from the peasants, especially when they heard that it [i.e., the government] could always be found ready to discharge the billions of war damage to the enemy powers in gold marks—no more trust, whether in the domestic or the foreign policy of such a government! When would a savior come?

8. THE RESTORATION OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE THROUGH ADOLF HITLER IN 1933. THE THIRD REICH

In the Reich:

This savior was here when, on March 21st, 1933, in the garrison church of Potsdam, the President of the Reich, Paul von Hindenburg, lay the Chancellorship of the Reich in the hands of Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Worker's Party which had obtained by far the greatest number of the votes in the preceding elections. This was the greatest present the venerable general-in-chief could have made to the German people. After his death one year later, it went without saying that his office would also go over to Hitler. Under the genial government of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, the greatest miracle in the shaping of our people has taken place. Whereas, in the Second Reich, Bismarck had united the German princes under the emperor's crown after bloody wars, Hitler in his Third Reich was able to weld together into one single nation the citizens of the Reich without shedding a drop of blood. All ancestral and territorial boundaries within his Reich fell away. "One people, one Reich, one Führer!" The World War, at the end of which many had been driven to madness, has now finally assumed its true meaning: we have not lost the war, but we won it. God had "afflicted" His German people and now has "redeemed" them through Adolf Hitler.

Without delay, the rise of Germany took place under Hitler's genial leadership. The fetters of the Peace of Versailles fell, one after the other:

1. In 1935, the return of the Saar to the Reich.

2. In the same year, the re-establishment of the universal draft.
3. In 1936, the occupation of the demilitarized Rhineland by German troops.
4. In the same year, full sovereignty over German rivers, the Reich's train system and the Reichsbank.
5. In 1937, the solemn annulment of the war damage clauses.
6. In 1938, the incorporation of Austria and the Sudete lands.
7. In 1939, the assumption of the protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia.
8. In addition the reunion of Memel with the Reich.

The Germany of Adolf Hitler has become that very Greater Germany for which the best of our people had yearned so often. It now covers an area of 635,000 sq. km., almost 100,000 more than before the World War, and counts 86 M fellow Germans, more than have ever been brought together by a German Reich. Within this mighty framework, which commands the respect of the foreign nations, is an economy whose every branch is bustling with activity, and . . . no more unemployed. This is what Adolf Hitler has achieved in six years.

In the Village:

Slowly, as in the empire, the national awakening took place, i.e., the transformation of a war and empire's weary mood into the conscious dawning of a national awareness and national action. Right from the beginning, the indigenous villagers had little use at all for communism and spartakism. In 1919, when a red invasion through Thuringia

had to be feared, a local militia armed with military rifles was founded in the village. Its duty was to repel eventual invaders with force. The first nationalistic movement, the Jungdeutscher Order [The Order of the Young Germans], which was very popular in our area, caused many a one in the village to start paying attention to its urgent slogan of: "Awake, Germany!" The rousing speeches of Miss Ellen—called Miss Elend by the Jews*—and of pastor Johnsen von Gauerstadt, our closest neighbor across the border, did not fall on deaf ears either.

At the same time, the social democratic agitation began in the village. It tried to attract mainly workers from the basalt works of Maroldsweisach and Boccawind. The Jewish community soon belonged unanimously to that party. It (the party) hoped to attract villagers with pageants organized by party members from Schweinfurt and Coburg. It had the positive effect that the majority of the Ermershauser came to the realization that, as farmers, they wanted nothing to do with people of that type. However, a further, more important consequence of this attack by the left was the founding of a national socialist local group in the village in 1931. At first it counted only 10-12 members, among whom were the two teachers, Siegfried Arnold and Adolf Wittstatt. That small host carried on undaunted until the local group became the center of the new national and social awareness in our community. This is shown in the next elections. Whereas in 1928 only 66 votes were cast for Hitler in the national elections, there were 298 in 1932 against 61 for the social democrats, and in the decisive vote of 1933, 308 votes against 50 of the opposing forces, which were to be credited in their majority to the Jewish voters. Women and girls adhered to the movement from the very beginning, faithfully partaking in every activity. The national-socialist message was spread

*This pun cannot be rendered in English. Since Elend means "misery" in German, Miss Elend means Miss Mistery.

from our village to other villages like Neuses and Bundorf. The Ermershauser party members and supporters of Hitler were usually strongly represented whether in pageants or in meetings in the neighboring townships.

The change in the political spirit that came about after the success of the NSDAP on Jan. 1, 1933 was applied systematically and with great success by master teacher Arnold, the first national socialist mayor. Not only did the new emblem [possibly a large flag], the Swastika, greet from up on the Rothlein, but also the spirit of the new empire was to be felt everywhere. The new mayor who, in the previous years, had built the Sports Stadium and the Shooting Range, now had the main street of the village lined with sidewalks. In view of the brisk traffic, this was felt to be quite timely. He also had the old sewage system in the upper village overhauled. Main Street was changed to Adolf Hitler Street in the outer village, and to Hindenburg Street in the upper village. On the open square along Frasen Street, a "Hitler linden" was planted, and at the place where the road forks off to Birkenfeld, a "Hindenburg linden". Doctor Street was renamed Horst Wessel Street, Rapp Street became Schlageter Street and Fräsen Street became Rudolf Berthold Street. Therefore, these names which are so important to the history of the new empire will be physically remembered in the village.

A special joy and pride was felt in the village when, in the first year of his seizure of power, the Führer accepted the honorary citizenship of the community which, with feelings of gratitude and devotion, had been offered to him.

Faithful to the spirit of his predecessor and to the national socialist principle: "Public good precedes private good!" the present and first indigenous national socialist mayor, Karl Bornkessel, continues to lead the community purposefully and with determination since 1935. Through the purchase and remodeling of property #50, he created a model home for the kindergarden which depends on a sister organization of the national socialist Public Welfare Office. A beautiful home for the Hitler Youth will not have to wait long. He will

certainly also be able to solve the Jewish question to the benefit of the community and in the spirit of the Party. In the referendum of 1936 the Ermershauser acknowledged unanimously the Führer and his policies. For this courageous stand they received from the Gauleiter [area commander] a special recognition in the form of a memorial tablet which, framed and glassed, is in the community room and will be held with honor for times to come. It reads:

On March 29, 1936, the men and women voters of this Franconian community unanimously acknowledged Adolf Hitler and thus also Germany. For the proud commendation of future generations.

Dr. Hellmuth, Gauleiter.

May this commendation from on high be a constant reminder to our Ermershauser that they may forever keep their faith to the village whose changing history we have learned in this book and which is so dear to our hearts; and faith also to the newly constituted great German fatherland and to its Führer who has led it so magnificently out of impotence to inner prosperity and to respect abroad.



An old house in the village.

Versammlungen in den benachbarten Städten sind die Ermershäuser Parteimitglieder und Anhänger Hitlers gewöhnlich stark vertreten.

Der am 31. Januar 1933 auf den Sieg der NSDAP. erfolgte politische Umschwung wird in Ermershausen zielbewußt und erfolgreich von Hauptlehrer Arnold als erstem nationalsozialistischen Bürgermeister durchgeführt. Nicht nur, daß das neue Hoheitszeichen, das Hakenkreuz, hoch vom Rößlein heruntergrüßt, auch der Geist des neuen Reiches macht sich bald überall bemerkbar. Der neue Bürgermeister, der schon in den Jahren voraus den Sport- und Schießplatz und den Badeweiher der Gemeinde geschaffen hat, läßt nun die Hauptstraße des Dorfes mit Gehsteigen versehen, die angesichts des starken Autoverkehrs als sehr zweckmäßig empfunden werden, und die alte Kanalisation im Oberdorf wieder herrichten. Die Hauptstraße erhält im Neudorf den Namen „Adolf Hitlerstraße“, im Oberdorf die Bezeichnung „Hindenburgstraße“. Dort wird auf dem freien Platz zur Fräsengasse eine Hitlerlinde, hier an der Straßengabelung nach Birkenfeld eine Hindenburglinde gepflanzt. Die Doktorergasse wird in „Horst Wesselstraße“, die Rappsgasse in „Schlageter“- und die Fräsengasse in „Rudolf Bertholdstraße“ umbenannt. So sollen diese für die Geschichte des neuen Reiches so bedeutsamen Namen auch im äußeren Bild des Dorfes eine bleibende Erinnerung sein. Besondere Freude und Stolz löste es im Dorfe aus, als der Führer im 1. Jahr der Machtübernahme das Ehrenbürgerrecht der Gemeinde annimmt, um welche Auszeichnung man ihn im Gefühl tiefter Dankbarkeit und Ergebung gebeten hat.

Getreu dem Geiste seines Vorgängers und dem nationalsozialistischen Grundsatz: „Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz!“ führt seit 1936 der derzeitige erste nationalsozialistische Bürgermeister aus der Reihe der Gemeindeangehörigen, Karl Bornkessel, mit Zielsicherheit und Entschlossenheit die Leitung der Gemeinde weiter. Er hat dem unter einer Schwester der nationalsozialistischen Volkswohlfahrt stehenden Kindergarten durch den Ankauf und Umbau des Anwesens Hs.-Nr. 50 ein vorbildliches Heim geschaffen, ein schönes Hitlerjugendheim wird nicht mehr lange auf sich warten lassen. Ihm wird es auch gelingen die Judenfrage im Dorfe im Sinne der Partei und zum Vorteil der Gemeinde zu lösen. Schon bei der Volksbefragung von 1936 bekennen sich die Ermershäuser einstimmig zum Führer und seiner Politik. Sie

erhalten für diese mannhafte Haltung die besondere Anerkennung des Gauleiters in der Form eines Gedenkblattes, das im Gemeindezimmer unter Glas und Rahmen ein Ehrenmal für alle Zeiten sein wird. Es lautet:

Die wahlberechtigten Männer und Frauen dieser Mainfränkischen Gemeinde bekannten sich am 29. März 1936 ausnahmslos zu Adolf Hitler und damit zu Deutschland. Kommenden Geschlechtern zur stolzen Erinnerung.

Dr. Hellmuth, Gauleiter.

Mögen diese Worte der Anerkennung von hoher Stelle eine stete Mahnung für unsere Ermershäuser sein. Mögen sie immer bewahren Treue ihrem Dorfe, dessen wechselreiche Geschichte wir in diesem Buche kennen gelernt und das uns damit um so mehr ans Herz gewachsen ist. Und Treue dem neuerstandenen großen deutschen Vaterland und seinem Führer, der es aus der Ohnmacht so herrlich zu innerem Gedeihen und Ansehen im Ausland geführt hat.

Heil Hitler!



Ein altes Wohnhaus im Dorfe.