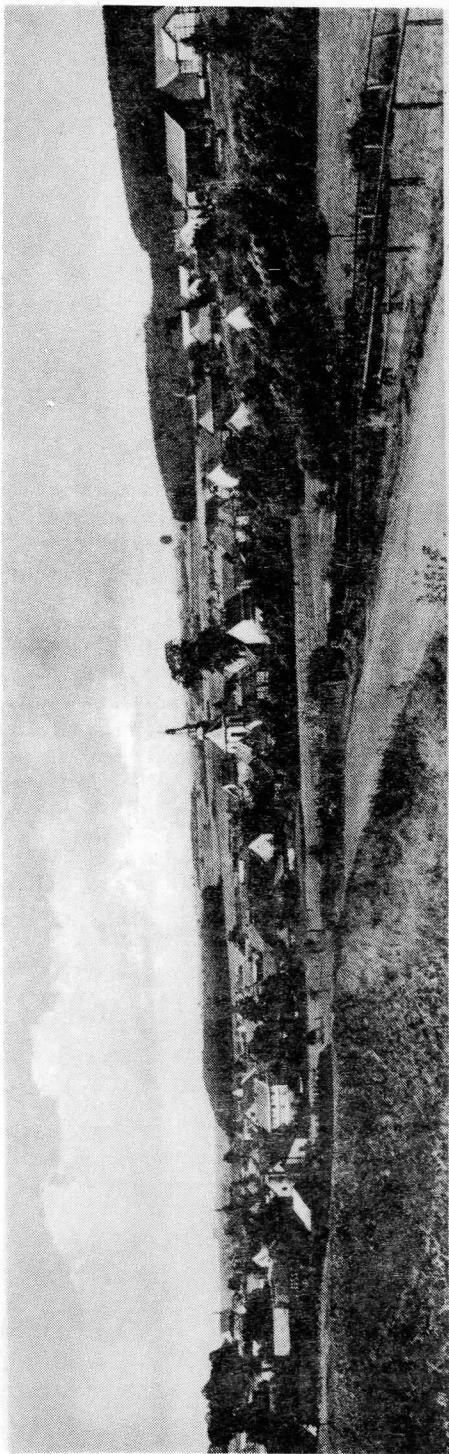
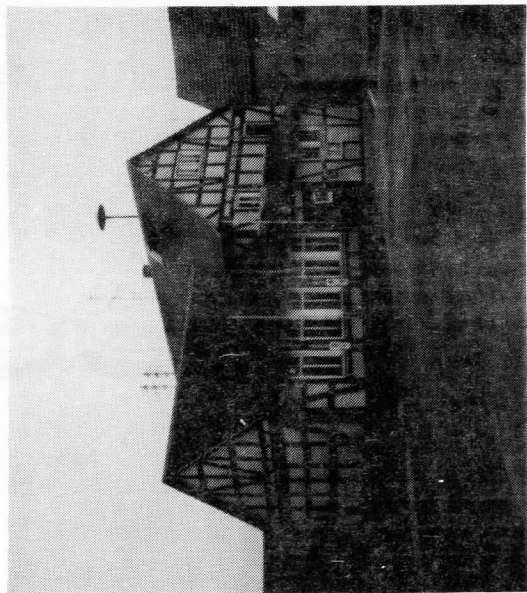


PART I  THE OLD COUNTRY



The Village of Nieder-Gemunden



THE TOWN HALL
(formerly the old school)

NIEDER-GEMUNDEN

On the west bank of the Felda not far from where it enters into the Ohm lies partially wreathed by splendid forests of ruling heights the village of Nieder-Gemunden in the county of Alsfeld. This favorable geographic location at the juncture of two valleys was the cause for a successful settlement even already in prehistoric times. The finds of the Old Stone Age are scarce, yet an arrow head found on the "Bluff" establishes with certainty, that old stone age hunters at least hunted here. More abundant are the stone remains of the Late Stone Age, the finely polished stone axes and hammer found in the area, as well as flat stones for pottery. Continuous settlement was left for the Bronze Age, as the amount of burial mounds in the area indicate. Celtic names provide evidence, that also this restless people settled here, only to be later dislodged by the Chatten (?Chats). Names of local natural formations, which make reference to Chatic God worship, are very numerous. Also, Christianity made an early entry into the Ohm and Felda valley. The partial renaming of Chatic shrines with Christian names indicates a very early advance of Christianity. Indeed, the fact that Bonifatius from Amoneburg moved the town to provide for the new order of religious furnishings, is seen yet today by the name in use for an old road from Amoneberg to Fulda, of which the part running through the district of Nieder-Gemunden bears the name "Pilgrim's Path". It is Christianization in the sense of Bonifatius' declared acquisition of land and people by the church that the town can thank for its first documented mentioning by name. In the Eberhard Summaries of the monastery at Fulda, a Count Argoz of Lahngau and his wife granted to the monastery a part of their domain at Bleidenrod, at Gemunden, Sorge, Windheim, among other places. At this time Sturmi was the abbot of the monastery, so that we can approximate this grant and with it the first mention of the town at a time between 750 and 780. According to Stengel, "Document Book of the Fulda Monastery", the name Argoz appears on March 6, 779 in the death notations of the monastery, which Stengel saw as the grantor of the aforementioned grant. From this resulted the supremacy of Fulda over the jurisdiction of Nieder-Gemunden, which the Count of Ziegenhain later acquired as fief of the monastery. In a treaty between Land-Count Heinrich I and his son-in-law, Gottfried von Ziegenhain, in the year 1283 is made a further reference to the town in a geographical appendix, "ze Gemunden an der straze" (to Gemunden at the street). In 1311 Count Johann von Ziegenhain set forth in his will, that his wife, Lutgarde, in the event of his death would retain the fortress of the present Burg-Gemunden as residency with the jurisdiction Nieder-Gemunden and Kirrtorf. It is unnecessary to go into the several references to the town over the following centuries. The result was an ever closer connection with the fortress. Then as the result of the activity of the family Rau at Holzhausen there soon arose a town near the fortress on the stone falls at the Ohm crossing, resulting quickly in the separation of the two Gemundens. Nieder-Gemunden, however, remained as a result of its being well situated for transportation, the judicial seat with the duty collection station for the "Office Burg-Gemunden". This office also had its only public tavern in Nieder-Gemunden. Besides Burg Gemunden and its judicial localities another 15 towns belonged to the judicial region of Nieder-Gemunden. Of these

there are, including Rulfenrod which was separated in 1467 to the Lord of Ehringshausen, still nine retained, while six have become extinct, i.e., were deserted. The nine remaining are: Burg and Nieder-Gemunden, Bleidenrod, Sorge, Elpenrod, Hainbach, Otterbach, Ermenrod, and Rulfenrod. The deserted towns in the region are: Frauenrod, Feldkrucken, Oertenrod, Bechterod, Harbach, and Bilsdorf. Thus, the town acquired a great significance over the ages in its relations on the transportation network. As North-South connection, the so-called road "through the width of Hesse" went through the town. The especially good transportation situation of the town is further demonstrated by the cross-roads Nieder-Gemunden-Ehringshausen and Nieder-Gemunden-Elpenrod-Ruppertenrod to Federal Highway 49-- a cross connection to the Autobahn. The building of the railway line Giessen-Fulda, with the secondary stretch beginning at the present day railway station Burg-Nieder-Gemunden-Kirchhain and a junction with the Main-Weser-Railway, turned the town into an important railway point. The construction of the Autobahn in 1936, the planned installation of a feeder system, and a public bus line to Gross-Felda could be seen as auspicious for the upward development of the town. This position as center of a wide-spread transportation network had to operate favorably for the development of the town and also should have offered suitable opportunities for subsidiaries for industrial operations of every kind in the future. The building of the railway had the further consequence, that on the other side of the Felda at the railway station a new residential quarter developed, which displayed in contrast to the old town very observable acceleration in its growth. The villagers named the quarter by the railway station the suburb in jest, in the possible expectation of what was to offer for the future.

Thus, from a rich farmers village, with its inclination toward handwork operations for the purpose of agriculture, a steadily growing community developed, whose population since 1945 nearly doubled through the influx of displaced persons.

The Nieder-Gemundeners are a clever people. That may well be because one already went to school in the middle of the 16th Century. An imposing number of teachers tried with success to instill the cultural wealth of their epochs to frequently unruly and initially not especially inquisitive students and pupils.

An old little schoolhouse with round windows served the medium of knowledge. In the school room next to the boys and girls striving for knowledge often sat the grown up daughter of the school master at her spinning wheel, to ease the meager money purse of her father. With the growth in the number of children and increasing demands the little schoolhouse became too small. The community decided on a new one. Around 1805 the land count's Trayser estate was acquired, apportioned, and in 1815 with the proceeds the building, serving the educational needs and still standing today, was built. A further extension was added in 1936/37. The location for a new schoolhouse has already been established. One fine day the new schoolhouse will be a reality. Right next to the school stands the 200 year old church. It was built on this place in 1756, where the old church stood. A fortunate circumstance saved the expensive cost for the new church building. A complete renovation in 1953 returned the church to a centerpiece of the town.

**The Evangelical Church
of Nieder-Gemunden**

*Built in 1756 through finances of
Johann Heinrich Stroh. Behind the
tree, on the right, is the old
school, now the church office.*



Climate and the nature of the soil allow a reasonably profitable agriculture. The area under cultivation amounts to about 587 hectares. In addition, within the region there are about 70 hectares of state or donated woods. The proportion of farmers to the whole population has stagnated. Land and earth are in the hands of the old families of the town, which can trace themselves along paternal lines as far back as the 16th century.

The original purely agricultural structure of the town brought with it the founding of a number of farmers' cooperatives. As a result, a dairy cooperative was formed in 1890, which today sources from an area covering 22 localities. Its products have acquired a good reputation far beyond the borders of its home. After the dairy followed the savings and loan association. Our central location gave reason for the grain storage cooperative in Alsfeld to set up a branch in Nieder-Gemunden, which can account for its own exceptionally noteworthy sales. That such a quiet community was equipped for 50 years with a water system of excellent quality water tells only part of its independent nature. An improvement for the community certainly occurred in 1921 when under Mayor Becker the electrical work at Dicknertsmühle was built together with the communities Burg-Gemunden and Bleidenrod. It was a civil deed in lightless times. 25 trade crafts, 10 commercial enterprises and 5 inns complete the picture of today's town. Also, industry made use of the attractive location of the town. Near the railway station, Tobro-GmbH., an office furniture factory employs nearly 50 workers and continues to expand its area. Its products are extensively distributed and bear along with the trademark of the firm the name of our town into many European countries. In 1953 Ring & Co., a precision machine shop was established. In a short time the founder is understood to have acquired a good and respected position in his specialty. The yet small factory stands on a solid foundation and is capable of growth and expansion.

The community leadership, out of recognition of the necessity for industrial investments, set aside attractively situated industrial areas during the field clearing implemented in 1984 and provided interested parties thoughtfully attractive terms.

The health of the population is looked after by a doctor and a dentist. A veterinarian also resides in the locality. If we glance back on our past, we can see that the town was not spared in the past centuries from what man or sickness wrought against fellow man. Nieder-Gemunden suffered especially in the Thirty Years War, which brought with it the great plague in 1635. In just four weeks the horrible scourge reaped 63 men into its victims. Also the Seven Year War left its traces, engagements taking place in the immediate vicinity of the town, by which the population also suffered severely. It displays an unswerving will to survive, that such reversals in no way acted to limit the development of the community.

The picture of the town would not be complete, if one did not recall two men in its past, who enjoy a great regard in Germany. In the 1830s the Nieder-Gemunden Pastor Friedrich Muench founded together with his brother-in-law the "German Emigration Society." The purpose of this association, which recruited all over Germany was to bring about a sanctuary in the United States in North America for all those who were persecuted in the homeland on account of their free way of thinking.

Around the turn of the 20th century the native Nieder-Gemunden born teacher, Karl Ludwig Feldmann, who worked in Frankfort, achieved a great success at the World Exposition in London for a poem written by him, which had been set to music expressly for the opening festivities by a well-known composer.

Thus Nieder-Gemunden offers us a town that can look back with pride on its 1000 year past. That which can be done by men in the interest of constant upward development in the scope of the means available is what will be grasped and accomplished energetically and successfully by the leadership of the community. --Head Teacher Erb



Dorfeingang mit neuer Brücke



Schlagmühle a. d. Elpenröderstraße

Scenes from Nieder-Gemunden