

## Development of an old Nieder-Gemunden Family

On the occasion of today's opening of business in the new building of the Karl Becker Company, it is appropriate to take a look back on a family which numbers among the oldest in our town. The hardware business of the Beckers is extensively known to our close community and seen and appreciated as a solid enterprise. It is the development of a family, which has resided here since 1665, consists today of several lines stemming from the paternal side and whose members have spread far throughout Germany and live with branches in the United States in North America.

In 1685 Balthasar Becker of Erbenhausen married into the old and still existing family, Pabst. Through subsequent marriages relations to the other old families of our town were generated. The family history of the "Ratwirts(of the Town-Inn)-Beckers" shows a steady upward development, which occasional crises could not disturb. The healthy farmer's pride and intelligence always persevered. In the community the "Ratwirts"-as they are known in the town-enjoy a good reputation and regard from everyone. In the references of our archives we find Beckers as church councilors, jurymen, church council chairmen, town councilmen and mayors. Twice the community has laid the destiny of the town in the hands of members of this family, both occasions in the difficult times. 21 years, from 1910-1931, Karl Becker I, the father of the present shop-owner, managed the destiny of the town along with wide branching business; led it with a sure and capable hand through the crisis of the First World War and the era of inflation. His name is inextricably linked to the construction of the electrical works in Dicknertsmühle (1921) and the founding of the common interest union of the three communities, Nieder- and Burg-Gemunden and Bleidenrod. We may say with full right: In dark times he provided his fellow citizens with bright rays of light.

Five years ago the company looked back on its 50-year-anniversary. This founding was also a work of the energetic old mayor. He died in 1931. It is a unique coincidence, that exactly 100 years before him in the year 1831 with the burial of his great-grandfather Johann Caspar Becker, the new cemetery was given its designation and consecrated.

In 1945 the current shop-owner Karl Becker was elected mayor. The construction of the third schoolhall and the implementation of the clearing of the fields took place during his tenure. It was further burdened with pressure in 1946, to accommodate almost as many displaced persons as there were native inhabitants. Cards and ration-notes and their undesirable companion certificates placed a heavy burden on the skill and ability of the mayor. Also, here the similarity of events stood. As his father had to persevere the inflation, so did his son have to implement the last official enactment of currency reform within the community.

As the name "Ratwirts(of the Town Inn)" indicates the town hall and inn were joined in the old extensive house. Also this house had a "moving" past; it stood originally as a brewery on the fortified hill of Burg-Gemunden. Corresponding with the custom of the time, it was taken down after its purchase and reconstructed in Nieder-Gemunden. The master finisher for the rooms preserved this event in a beautiful saying, which still adorns the house today: "Look at me and read, I have been an old brewery; one took justly into view and made me again just like new."

In 1792 the owner also received brewery rights. Later was yet another special brewery built, in which for decades in the cellar of the town hall the noble brew was made. This Nieder-Gemundener Beer tasted as well of judge and jury, who had to sit in judgement over the poor sinners. Nieder-Gemunden was the court-seat of the jurisdiction of Burg-Gemunden. In the "Urtelsstibbene" (judgement room), as it is still called today, did the law speak. The iron pillory is unfortunately no longer present.

It can still be established, that a grocery store stood for a long time in the house, long before the opening of the hardware business. The demand for goods of modern civilization was at that time still little. Oxen were used to fetch the few goods in demand from Marburg.

Thus, the house and family Becker display a part of the town history of Nieder-Gemunden. They are a faithful representation of the ups and downs in the changing course of the times. The family is twice insured in its paternal lines, so that one may hope for a further prosperous upward development of the old family.





Mayor Karl Becker and family.

*No. 46 on the Becker Genealogy Chart*

*Left to right: son Ernst, wife Frieda, Karl, and daughter Christa; picture taken in 1974. Karl was elected Mayor in 1945. In his later years, he suffered a stroke and died in 1978.*

Below, the hardware store of Karl Becker.

