The Last Residents of Schowe

Schowe was one of many Yugoslavian villages settled by ethnic Germans in the late 1700s. It is where my father's family is from. At the end of WWII, the populace either fled, were put into concentration camps established by the Yugoslavians or sent to Russian labor camps. Those that survived scattered throughout Germany and the United States. You can read about the "Danube Swabians" here.

While most traces of German presence in what is now Serbia have been scrubbed away, we know much about Schowe from surviving records, particularly the 1944 census and "1961 Heimatbuch" compiled by the last mayor of Schowe. Most usage of these records is by individuals looking for their personal family history. I thought it would be interesting to take a broad view of the data, as well. The data as presented is a bit messy and required a lot of cleaning. It's still not perfect but I was able to get the data into a useful table containing the following items:

```
##  [1] "last_name"     "first_name"    "maiden_name"   "faith"
##  [5] "street"        "house"         "village"       "born"
##  [9] "died"          "fate"          "last_location" "last_district"
## [13] "birth_date"    "death_date"    "raw_text"      "gender"
```

Few rows are have all pieces of data.

Population

What were demographics of the town before the end of the war?

Schowe was a village of about 2,500 souls.

```
## # A tibble: 3 x 3
##   gender  count   age
##   <fct>   <int> <dbl>
## 1 Female   1358  38.6
## 2 Male     1152  36.5
## 3 unknown     8  39
```

What was the population of Schowe by street?

```
## # A tibble: 23 x 3
## # Groups:   village [3]
##    village   street          population
##    <chr>     <fct>                <int>
##  1 NeuSchowe Debrezin-Gasse         417
##  2 NeuSchowe Lange-Gasse            414
##  3 NeuSchowe Haupt-Gasse            370
##  4 NeuSchowe Allee-Gasse            234
##  5 NeuSchowe Wolf-Gasse             187
##  6 AltSchowe Lange-Gasse            149
##  7 NeuSchowe Rappen-Gasse           136
##  8 AltSchowe Seil-Gasse             132
##  9 AltSchowe Kuzuraer-Gasse         122
## 10 NeuSchowe Frosch-Gasse            85
## # ... with 13 more rows
```

Names

These German villages, small and surrounded by Yugoslavians, were fairly insular. Marriage among cousins was common so there is not a lot of surname diversity. There were 250 Hallers in the village. There were 23 Jakob Hallers and 29 Elisabeth Hallers! Things must have been confusing at the church picnic.
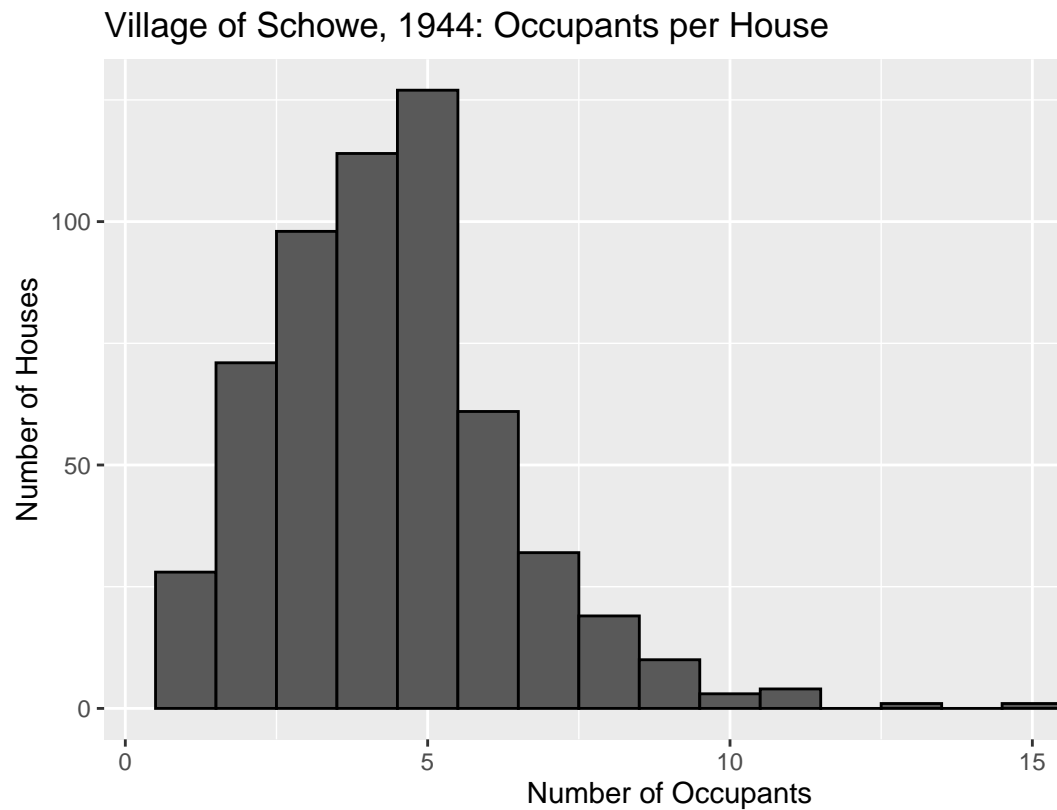
Bolz Haller Heiser Enzminger Werth Werthmann Kohler Geiss Fechter Seil Lenhardt Hetzel Brücker Lick Böhm Banyai Brausch Tauß Sohl Finitzer Petri Nehlich Lenz Licht Sehne Ilg Sperzel Weiss Zimmer Lepold Kolter Fischer Ludwig Müller Fess Hoffmann Heil Hillrich Teschner Gutwein Steinmetz Werle Jung Strung Einz Zöllner Metzger Roth Weinz Falkenstein Strehling Bauer Schnur Wolf Rusitschka Weber Schneider Poth Tiefentäler Weichingel Emich Reitenbach Huik Röder Lehr Heinz Greifenstein Walz Febel Riegel Lahm Mensinger Martin Mohr Häuser Walter Frey Tauss Reidl Keck Ziwich Schmoll Schmidt Becker Scherer Gussmann Ries Pataki Schick Dietrich Klein Meister Haug Welker Harfmann Krieger Geyer Nonnenmacher Harich Werner

Female

Paula · Elfriede · Adelheid · Christina · Wilhelmine · Therese · Berta · Luise · Barbara · Hildegard · Edeltraud · Klara · Philippina · Susanna · Margaretha · Christine · Helene · Elisabetha · Maria · Erika · Margarethe · Herta · Rosina · Magdalena · Margareth · Katharma · Sidonia · Juliane · Anna · Philippine · Hertha · Hilda · Käthe · Johanna · Theresia · Gertrud · Hannelore · Gerlinde · Hella · Salomea · Karolina · Eva · Gisela · Wilma · Katharina · Aranka · Helga · unknown · Anneliese · Etel · Sofia · Helena · Erna · Karoline · Samuel · Martin · Walter · Elisabeth

Male

Karl · Georg · Reinhardt · Josef · Stefan · Jakob · Hans · Daniel · Fritz · Michael · Peter · Richard · Werner · Erich · Ferdinand · Willi · Johann · Ludwig · Helmut · Hedwig · Heinrich · Dr · Gerhard · Hermann · Adam · Philipp · Wilhelm · Bernhard · Andreas · Otto · Anton · Stephan · Friedrich · Franz · Christian · Jokab · Horst · Nikolaus · Herbert · Helmuth · Rudi · Reinhard

Haller–Hetzel

Brücker–Haug

Haller–Scherer

Haller–Müller   Haller–Krieger

Brücker–Haller

Haller–Lepold

Brücker–Brücker

Brücker–Seil

Geyer–Müller   Haller–Heil

Haller–Haller

Krieger–Krieger   Haller–Welker

Febel–Hetzel

Brücker–Hetzel   Geyer–Haller

Brücker–Welker
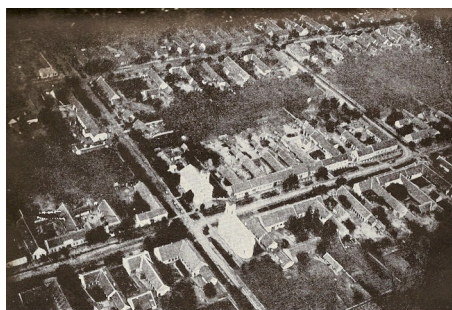
Bolz–Haller

Brücker–Krieger

Most popular pairings

Households

Number of people per household.

Religion

There were four churches in the town. Two massive Lutheran churches, Reformed and Evangelical, faced each other in the center of town. I can only speculate about the competition between the pastors for best sermon each Sunday.

 Source: dvhh.org

In addition there was a Catholic church and a Jewish synagogue. As you might imagine, after five years of Nazi rule, there were no Jews listed in the 1944 census. The locations of all four churches are visible from Google Street View. Interestingly, all are vacant lots today.

```
schowe_residents_1944 %>% count(faith) %>% arrange(desc(n))
```

```
## # A tibble: 4 x 2
```

```
##    faith         n
##    <fct>     <int>
## 1 Evangelical  1038
## 2 Reformed      882
## 3 unknown       585
## 4 Catholic       13
```

Ethnic Cleansing of Schowe

During a chaotic few weeks in October 1944, the German army retreated westward, the Yugoslavian Partisans and Russians advanced, and many villagers fled. Some stayed. What was their fate? The Heimatbuch lists the fate of most of the residents. If there is no death date in the Heimatbuch, but there is a last location that is not a camp, I classify them as "expelled." Note that people may have spent time in the camps and survived (like my great aunt) so are thus counted as expelled. "Died" is usually in one of the Yugoslavian concentration camps or in Russia so I break that out as a separate category.

```
## Scale for 'colour' is already present. Adding another scale for
## 'colour', which will replace the existing scale.
```

Fate of the Schower after WWII

1 body = 10 lives

Source: Heimatbuch der Gemeinde Schowe – 1961

Legend:
- 1616 expelled
- 487 died in Lager Jarek
- 169 died
- 107 unknown
- 55 died in another camp
- 35 died in Russia
- 35 missing
- 14 violent death
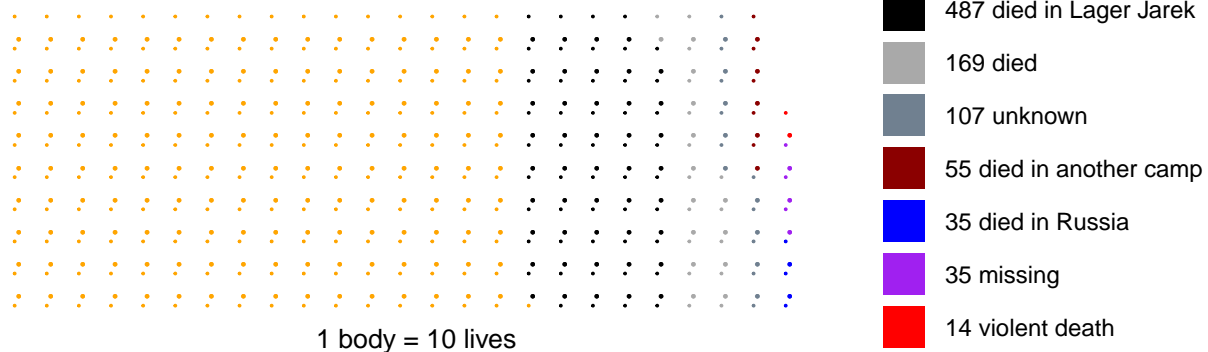
```
## # A tibble: 10 x 2
##    fate              count
##    <fct>             <int>
##  1 expelled           1616
##  2 died in Lager Jarek  487
```

```
##  3 died                    169
##  4 unknown                 107
##  5 died in another camp     55
##  6 died in Russia           35
##  7 missing                  35
##  8 murdered                  7
##  9 killed in action          6
## 10 hanged                    1
```

A large fraction of the village population was sent to concentration camps in Yugoslavia or labor camps in Russia and died there. An unknown fraction of those counted as "expelled" went through the camps and survived.

```
## # A tibble: 4 x 2
##   last_location    deaths
##   <chr>            <int>
## 1 Lager Jarek        485
## 2 Lager Krusevlje     33
## 3 Other Lagers        23
## 4 Rußland             38
```

Among the residents whose death year is specified, in what years were the deaths concentrated? While the fates of most residents are in the table, only a few have the year of death so this is a small subset of all the deaths.

```
## # A tibble: 9 x 2
##   fate                 avg_died
##   <fct>                   <int>
## 1 died                     1950
## 2 died in another camp     1946
## 3 died in Lager Jarek      1945
## 4 died in Russia           1943
## 5 expelled                 1939
## 6 hanged                   1944
## 7 missing                  1944
## 8 murdered                 1944
## 9 unknown                  1947
```

Schower Deaths in the Camps after WWII

Legend:
- ■ Lager Jarek 485
- ■ Lager Krusevlje 33
- ■ Other Lagers 23
- ■ Rußland 38
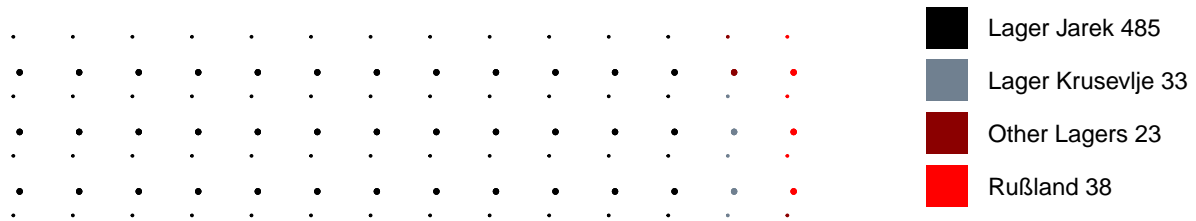
1 body = 10 lives

Source: Heimatbuch der Gemeinde Schowe – 1961

My great aunt chose not to flee with her daughter, presumably to care for her mother. The choice was fatal for her daughter, Elisabeth and mother, Theresia. Only my great aunt survived to emigrate to Cleveland in the '50s.
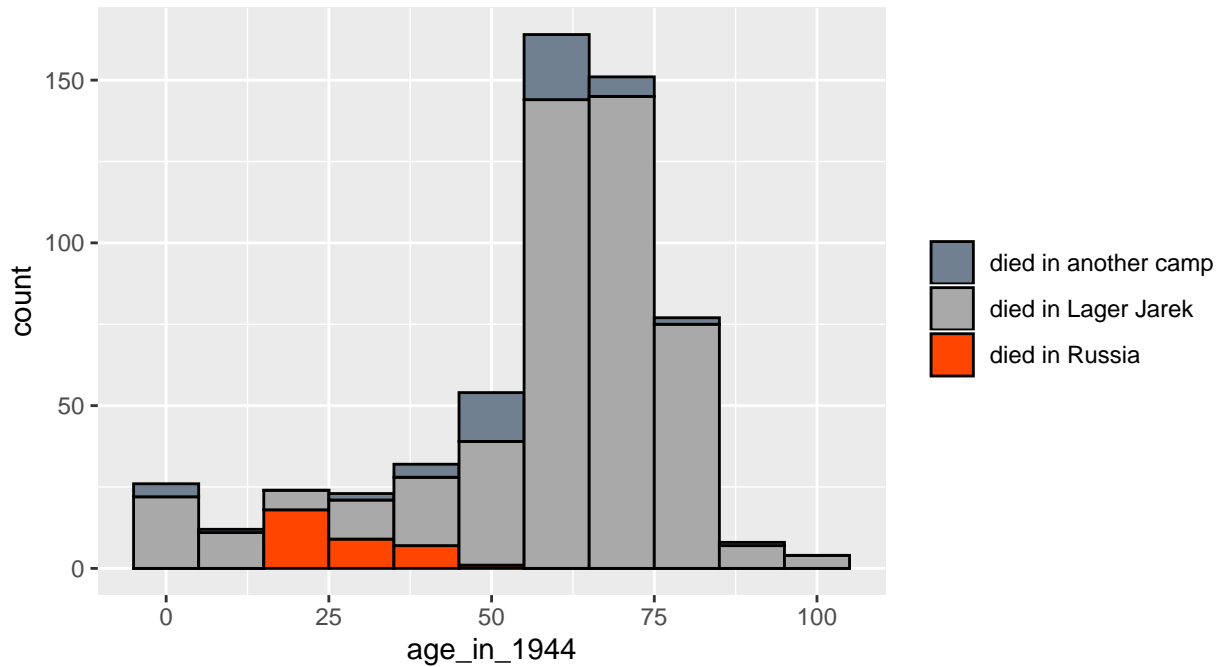
33 villagers were sent to Russia and died there. 4 of the 33 were women, aged 20,20,20 and 26. Among them was Elisabeth. Theresia died in Lager Jarek at the age of 79.

Elisabeth Poth about 1940. Photo by the Johann Pataki studio in Neu Schowe. Johann Pataki also died in a

Schowe Villagers: Deaths in Camp by Age

The youth were sent to Russia. The old did not survive the camps.

Note: Age "100" means "unknown"
Source: Heimatbuch der Gemeinde Schowe – 1961",

camp.

Among those who survived expulsion, most wound up scattered thoughout Germany but the most popular single destination, by a wide margin, was Cleveland, Ohio, USA. Cleveland is home to a large Danube Swabian community that was established before and after WWI. Many of my family came to Cleveland during this time.

```
## # A tibble: 322 x 2
##    last_location  count
##    <chr>          <int>
##  1 Cleveland, USA   292
##  2 unknown          170
##  3 Waiblingen        64
##  4 Winnenden         48
##  5 München           44
##  6 Endersbach        34
##  7 Wien              34
##  8 Canada            29
##  9 Schwaikheim       28
## 10 USA               24
## # ... with 312 more rows
```