

Timeline of the German-American Bund in Southbury

**By Melinda K. Elliott
for Southbury Historical Society, 2018**

September 27, 1937, Monday

Wolfgang T. Jung of Stamford purchased 178-acres of land in the Kettletown section of Southbury from Frederick Andrews and Garfield Morrison who had jointly owned the property for ten years. Bypassing local real estate agents, Jung used agents from Danbury and Bethel. The land was previously owned by the Waterbury Brass Factory, who used it for logging.

October 25, 1937, Monday

Wolfgang T. Jung wrote a letter to the Southbury Town Clerk, explaining that he had purchased the property. He also sent a copy of the warranty deed to register the purchase of the land. This was the first indication to the town that the property had been sold. No one knew at this time that Jung was the architect who was to plan a new German-American Bund camp.

November 7, 1937, Sunday

Over 100 German-American Bund members and their families, from the Districts of Westchester County, the Bronx, New Jersey, and Stamford converged on Southbury in 35 cars to begin clearing a road into the purchased property. The nearest neighbor, David Roulston and his wife, gave directions to them when they stopped at his house.

A few men from the Bund stopped at Mc Carthy's store to ask about purchasing a large amount of supplies on a continuing basis. McCarthy said he would think about. As they left, he followed them to the clearing site and then went to tell First Selectman J. Edward Coer.

November 8, 1937, Monday

Ed Coer confirms with Town Clerk, Dwight Hubbell, that the property had indeed been legally sold, and quickly finds out the purpose is to build a German-American Bund Camp. He begins discussions with the other selectmen.

November 9, 1937, Tuesday

The FBI, who were following the Bund's progress across the United States sent a letter to Ed Coer, suggesting possible ways of combatting the establishment of the Bund camp.

November 14, 1937, Sunday

A smaller group than before of Bund members arrived to continue clearing the land. Neil Agnew, the vice-president of Paramount Pictures, Inc., and his wife, Arlene Francis, arrived at their weekend home and find a new road along their property, off of Georges Hill Road.

Reporters from Waterbury Republican and other newspapers arrive at the clearing site and speak with the workers. The workers allow their photos to be taken and gave their names for the captions.

November 15, 1937, Monday

The Waterbury Republican's morning newspaper headline stated, "*Nations' Largest Pro-Nazi Camp Started In Southbury By German-American Bund.*" A hand-drawn map was made by the reporter, C. Robert Abbott, giving the approximate placement of the camp. The name of the camp would be Camp General von Stueben, named after a Prussian General who helped George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

November 17, 1937, Wednesday

A reporter talked with Wolfgang Jung, architect for the Southbury Bund camp, and asked why the purchase of the land was done quietly, and not through Southbury realtors. Jung replied, "So that the Jews wouldn't prevent the sale."

November 17, 1937, Wednesday

First Selectman J. Edward Coer and the other two selectmen, Harry D. Platt, and John Reynolds, decided on a plan of action. A warning for a Special Town Meeting was posted. The topic: "for establishing a Zoning Commission, their terms of office and to authorize the Zoning Commission to act."

November 19, 1937, Friday

Letters were received by all Southbury residents from "The Kettleowners" warning against the "goose-stepping" threat that could possibly lower property values, and with the dire admonition to "attend the Town Meeting and do your civic duty." They also received a reprint of the article, by Joseph F. Dinneen's article called, "*An American Fuhrer Organizes an Army.*"

November 21, 1937, Sunday

Rev. M.E.N. Lindsay and Rev. Felix Manley preach sermons against the Nazis and against the German-American Bund Camp. Lindsay said, "I maintain these camps are highly undesirable, because first, the whole movement is un-Christian; second, it is un-American; and third, it is pro-Nazi." Manley's comments included, "This camp is obviously planned as a training station for young Hitler youth who will stretch their hands in the Nazi salute and 'heil Hitler' with all that it implies."

November 23, 1937, Tuesday

The Special Town Meeting was held in the South Britain Congregational Church, since the Town Hall was not large enough to hold all the people who showed up. First Selectman, J. Edward Coer, made a motion that the Town of Southbury establish a Zoning Commission and empower it to act..." The vote was passed 122 to 41. Appointed Commissioners included Albert Aston, Leslie D. Wheeler, Henry J. McCarthy, Herbert E. Wells, and Robert C. Mitchell.

Immediately at the end of the Special Town Meeting, a Public Meeting was held to discuss the German-American Bund camp. George Holmes presented a resolution against the camp and Nazi-ism to go to the Governor, Congress, and the President, which was overwhelmingly accepted. Miss Jennie Hinman submitted a resolution that flags or emblems of foreign governments could only be flown alongside the American flag.

November 24, 1937, Wednesday

Bund Regional Organizer, Carl Nicolay, is asked his reaction to the Town Meeting and the Public Meeting. He states that he first needs to talk with his Bund observers before making any comment. Several Bund members were placed in Southbury to watch and report on everything that was happening in town.

November 28, 1937, Sunday

G. Wilhelm Kunze, the Director of Publicity for the German-American Bund, arrives in Southbury to discuss the philosophy of the German-American Bund, and the camp separately with both Rev. M.E.N. Lindsay and Rev. Felix Manley after their critical sermons the previous Sunday. He stays in town several days, talking with various town officials.

During the week, most townspeople receive mail from the German-American Bund containing a pamphlet stating the Bund's "Purpose and Aims," and an application to join the Bund. To apply, one must state that, "I am of Aryan origin, free from Jewish or colored blood." The initial fee is \$1.00 for joining, and seventy-five cents monthly dues.

December 5, 1937, Sunday

Acting on a complaint from Bund camp neighbors, the Grand Juror, Alrick Nelson, conferred with the first selectman and secured 30 John Doe warrants from Judge Harold Hicock. Constable King, with Constables David Joselwitz, John E. Walker, Edward A. Scoville, Jr., Norman Beardsley and Francis Bower, along with Nelson, arrived at the camp in three cars. Two men, Gustav Korn and Richard Koehler were arrested for working on Sunday. They were taken to the Judge Hicock, who required \$75 each for bail. The trial was set for 10 am on December 11, at the Community Hall.

December 7, 1937, Tuesday

An FBI agent arrived in Southbury to check out the deed of sale of the Bund property, in their ongoing investigation of the German-American Bund. The newspapers reported this the next week on December 15, 1937.

December 8, 1937, Wednesday

The Zoning Commission finished writing the zoning code and published it for review of the townspeople. The area of the Bund camp would be restricted to farming and residential dwellings. No military training would be allowed. Another special Town Meeting is scheduled on December 14 to answer any questions and vote on the code.

December 10, 1937, Friday

George Holmes calls a state-wide meeting in the Community Hall to form a group, "United Americans." Their goal is to fight anything un-American. The key speaker of the evening was American Isobel Lillian Steele, a journalist, who was imprisoned in a German Nazi jail for four months. On the same day, the local newspaper exposed the fact that Holmes was once a member of the Ku Klux Klan for a few months. Holmes confirmed the allegations saying that he got out when he fully understood the Klan's purposes.

December 11, 1937, Saturday

A large number of newspapermen and photographers arrive in town to cover the "Blue Laws Trials" of the arrested Bund members. Outside the community hall, several people hold picket signs against the Bund. The story makes the national newsreel, with three residents featured. The trial was postponed until December 27 due to material witnesses not being available.

December 13, 1937, Monday

Many newspapers and personal comments are directed against Southbury for using the "Blue Laws" to arrest the two Bund workers. Grand Juror, Alrick Nelson, who issued the warrants, felt the need to defend himself in a Waterbury Republican editorial stating that "what people are considering an old archaic law, is in fact, in the State Statutes of 1931 and 1937." He wrote, "We are all sworn to do our duty."

December 14, 1937, Tuesday

A Special Town Meeting is held in the Community Hall at 2 pm. The new zoning code is read in full by J. Edward Coer. A heated discussion follows for a couple of hours before a vote was taken by ballot. The final vote was 142-91 for the zoning code.

December 27, 1937

The trial of the Bund members begins sharply at 10 am, with both men pleading guilty to working on Sunday. However, the charges were dropped due to the urging of Attorney Basil Bass, who stated that the purpose of the arrests had been met. In the meantime, Bund leaders say that they will continue to fight to build the camp, and will “do whatever it takes” to make it happen.

January 4, 1938

Members of the town were paid to re-enact the special town meeting of November 23 in the South Britain Congregational Church. The March of Time newsreel film was released on January 18.

September 1938

Gustave Buckel, Bund leader for the Connecticut division, is given control of the Bund property. He states that the Bund will build a Nazi “model community” with their own houses, school, and church. The plan was later dropped because, “the land was too steep and not in the middle of the state.”

March 1939

The 178-acres of land was put up for sale. Several organizations showed interest in purchasing the land, at a lower cost than the original price of \$4,000, but the Bund wanted to recoup the full value.

July 1940

Wolfgang Jung sold the Bund property to George Munk, the former Stamford Bund leader, for “One dollar and other valuable considerations.” The Stamford Advocate reported that the “signs pointing the way to the [Bund] campsite through town have been taken down.”

1972 - 1980

Munk kept the property for many years to use the lumber in his cabinet shop. From 1972 to 1980, he sold off building lots to contractors.

2013

Home of the Brave, When Southbury Said No to the Nazis is made by Scott Sniffen with the Southbury Historical Society to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the event.

Selected Bibliography:

From Southbury Historical Society archives:

Letter from Wolfgang T. Jung to Town Clerk, October 25, 1937

Sermon of Rev. M.E.N. Lindsay

Letter from Rev. Felix Manley

Application to join the German-American Bund

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Catherine McCarthy interview by Mike Boehm, November 1978

"50 Years of Southbury, Dedicated to the Faithful Officials,
1912 – 1962" booklet by Edward Coer

"The expulsion of the German-American Bund from Southbury Connecticut in December 1937" Schling, Dorothy
1987

Notice of Special Meeting

Books:

Bernstein, Arnie "Swastika Nation: Fritz Kuhn and the Rise and Fall of the German-American Bund"

Clark, Howard, "Saga of Pomperaug Plantation, 1673-1973: Southbury Tercentennial, Southbury, Connecticut"

Vara, Theresa C. "The History of the United Church of Christ, Southbury, Connecticut"

Numerous Newspaper articles:

The Bridgeport Post

Stamford Advocate

Danbury News-Times

Hartford Courant

Waterbury American

Waterbury Republican

Voices

For further research in the SHS archives, check out the

Finding Aid for the Bund Collection:

http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/6a6b47_4ac6f04ba40b433ea3cd39feb7e22dbd.pdf