

North Star Chapter

November 2008

<http://www.northstarchapter.org/>

Volume 33 Number 4

What's the Difference?: Sharing Our Favorite Books & Genealogy Info

Biannual Genealogy Workshop

Saturday, November 15, 2008, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Berea Lutheran Church, 7538 Emerson Ave. S., Richfield, MN

As a combined chapter, we are fortunate to have members whose descendants came from all areas of Russia. Perhaps you have wondered what some of the differences really are, or why there are differences. This fall's genealogy workshop will allow you to share what you know about your area, and books that have helped you learn about it. Please bring your favorite German-Russian and genealogy books, and spend a few minutes letting the group know what helpful information you have found there. Also, if you have found helpful books in our extensive chapter library, let others know what they are and how you were able to use them. Don't forget books about the German-Russian experience in America. This will be in informal, member-led presentation for beginning and advanced family historians. The library will be open at 10:00 for research (bring a bag lunch if you plan to spend a few hours), and the meeting, which will include election of officers, will begin at 1:00.

Weihnachtsfest

Saturday, December 6, 2008, Noon – 4:00 PM

Berea Lutheran Church, 7538 Emerson Ave. S., Richfield MN

Our much-loved holiday event, Weihnachtsfest, will again be a chance to get together, eat great food, and share our holiday memories. This is a potluck lunch, so please bring your favorite item to share. Beverages and eating utensils will be provided. We'll be treated to holiday organ music from Schmitt Music, with the opportunity to sing carols and share favorite stories. Guests are especially welcome.

We would like help making punch, setting up, and cleaning afterward. If you could volunteer some extra time, please contact Lil Ward at 763-784-8626 or lilward@comcast.net.

Upcoming Dates

January 17, 2009: Program to be determined

Please Take Note

If you will be at a different address for the winter, please make sure you give that address to Ardella Bennett at 952-884-4241 or ardellabennett@msn.com. The newsletter cannot be forwarded, and it will cost us postage if it is returned, as well as additional postage if mailed separately to your winter address. Help our chapter save money and make sure you get your newsletter during the winter months.

The intersection of 494 and Lyndale will probably be closed for construction by the November meeting. Please take extra time to arrive, and consider an alternative route, such as the Nicollet exit.

Don't think you have to make a year-long commitment to be a chapter volunteer. We have plenty of need for one-time volunteering, such as set up and/or take down during meetings, or bringing treats. Please let an officer know if you're attending a meeting and could lend a hand, or just pitch in when you arrive.

The Fifth Annual AHSGR Membership Campaign – ABOVE AND BEYOND – is now in full swing. The campaign will reward AHSGR members and chapters who recruit new members or purchase gift memberships. The campaign ends May 15, 2009, and cash prizes will be awarded at the AHSGR National Convention in Medicine Hat, AB, Canada, in June 2009. For more information, visit <http://www.ahsgr.org/membership/htm>.

Handel's "Messiah" will be performed on Saturday, December 13, 7:00 pm, and Sunday, December 14, 4:00 pm by the St. John's Lutheran Oratorio chorus, soloists, and chamber orchestra. St. John's is located at 4842 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis. German-Russian Joyce Schumacher Larson, Golden Valley, who grew up near Long Lake, SD, is St. John's music director. Joyce was instrumental in organizing the National Convention of the American Guild of Organists held in Minneapolis in June. For more information, visit www.stjohnsmpls.org or call 612-827-4406.

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North Star Chapter Germans from Russia, 1978 – 2008: A Short History

A small group of Minneapolis and St. Paul area German-Russian descendants gathered during the winter of 1977–78 to discuss the creation of a *Gemeinschaft* for German-Russian fellowship. From this grassroots beginning emerged the North Star Chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.

Who are the Germans from Russia?

They are German colonists who began their exit from a fractured, war-torn homeland beginning in 1763, accepting the invitation of the German-born Catherine the Great, Czarina of Russia, to settle the region along the Volga River. After Catherine's grandson Czar Alexander issued a similar invitation in 1804, another wave of German-speaking colonists immigrated to the Black Sea region of South Russia.

When colonial status for the Germans in Russia was abrogated in 1873, over 3,000 colonies had been established, and our German farming ancestors were feeding the world with grain shipped from the Black Sea port of Odessa. Despite agricultural success, the winds of political change were strong enough to encourage thousands to leave Russia for the promise of free land in the Americas. From 1873 until WWI, wandering Germans from Russia made their way across America to Ohio, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, North and South Dakota. The migrations continued to Canada and South America, and later, to the Pacific Northwest and California. In 30 states, Canada, Mexico, and South America, the Germans from Russia carried with them their language, music, religion, work ethic, value system and a unique folk culture.

By the middle of the 20th century, German-Russian descendants were leaving the farms to work in urban centers across America, taking with them the values and work ethic passed down from their pioneer ancestors. The North Star Chapter Germans from Russia membership in Minnesota can claim ancestors from many of the different German-Russian settlement areas in Russia and North America.

The annual North Star Chapter Spring Banquet has long been a venue for scholars, musicians, and exhibits. Every December, banquet tables groan under the weight of German-Russian delicacies prepared by members for the annual *Weihnachtsfest* celebration. Annual events, including two annual genealogy workshops and four educational meetings featuring German-Russian researchers, have given the chapter a national reputation for innovative programming.

The early years of bake and craft sales gave way to membership crews preparing and serving ethnic meals. North Star October-fests and Harvest Festivals garnered large crowds and an opportunity to share the culture with a larger audience. The North Star Chapter's first priority was to establish a library. Today, the chapter library includes rare editions, many out-of-print volumes, most major works written about the Germans from Russia, and scholarly journals from the international Germans from Russia organizations.

In 1996, after years of research, the North Star Chapter proudly published *Sei Unser Gast*, a cookbook celebrating the history of German-Russian foodways. Now in its 19th printing, the cookbook remains a popular

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seller in book and specialty stores across the country. An estimated 20,000 North Star cookbooks are in circulation today.

Nothing builds a sense of community like a special project. Hosting two successful International Conventions of Germans from Russia, in 1981 and 1996, proved the North Star Chapter was a key player in the growth and awareness of this unique ethnic heritage. Many North Star Chapter members have served or currently serve in leadership roles in the largest international organizations; the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR), headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS). In 2007 the North Star Chapter added official chapter affiliation with GRHS, headquartered in Bismarck, ND.

Continuing its mission of cultural education, the North Star Chapter helped to raise funds in 1998 for the first television documentary about the Germans from Russia entitled: "*Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie*" produced by Prairie Public Television and North Dakota State University Libraries. Several North Star Chapter members collaborated with subsequent documentaries also produced by PPTV and NSDU Libraries. Skilled members also translate published works from German or Russian to English, and research and write for scholarly journals and other new publications. Some North Star Chapter members have been fortunate to visit their ancestral villages in Russia and Germany, and cheerfully share their experiences and research with other members. Many members regularly attend international conventions of Germans from Russia.

Collaboration with other groups, especially AHSGR, GRHS, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC), Glueckstal Colonies Research Association (GCRA),

Prairie Public Television, Twin Cities Public Television, Minnesota Humanities Commission, and the Minnesota Historical Society has established the North Star Chapter Germans from Russia as a leader in German-Russian heritage preservation.

For 30 years, members of the North Star Chapter have mirrored the values of their agrarian ancestors. With diligence and dedication they have built a strong community with enduring *Gemeinschaft* in the middle of urban America.

Member News

Congratulations to Mayo Flegel for his Honorable Mention win in the AHSGR Storytelling Contest held during the dual national convention in Casper, WY, in July.

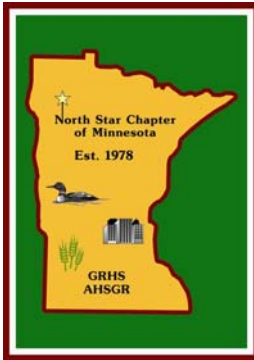
Condolences to Rachel Schmidt, office manager for GRHS headquarters, at the passing of her father Melvin Mayer of Streeter, ND, on Sept. 6, 2008.

Congratulations to Michael Miller for being named 2008 Librarian of the Year by the North Dakota Library Association. Michael has been a librarian at North Dakota State University since 1967. He is Director of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at NDSU, which he developed in 1978, and has dedicated his career to the preservation of the written, oral, and physical history of the Germans from Russia.

Happy Anniversary

November: Sandy & Arnie Zimmerman

December: Elena & Marv Geske, Angie & John Ibarra, Carol & Arve Moser



President's Message

By Duane Stabler, North Star Chapter

By the time this newsletter catches up with you, we'll have had two North Star Chapter meetings already this year and we'll be ap-

proaching our November genealogy workshop as well as the Weihnachtsfest in early December. Wow, where did the year go?

Our November meeting is an important one in the life of the North Star Chapter; in addition to the workshop, we'll have a business meeting to elect the 2009 officers. In advance of that, we'll be determining who, of our officers, is willing to run for the second year. Lil Ward completes her second year as our VP of Programming and we'll need her replacement to pick up where Lil leaves off.

I strongly urge members who have never participated in the operation of the chapter to step up and volunteer, if not for an office, then for one of the many other tasks that need to be done with some planning. Remember that many hands make small work of most tasks. I also strongly urge you to consider accepting the VP of Membership should you be asked by the nominating committee. It's so important to have a full slate of volunteers come Election Day. Obviously, if we don't have some jobs filled then some things will not get done. I know everyone enjoys programs but think about a meeting that has no programs and maybe no treats. We'd show up, talk amongst ourselves a bit, then drive home feeling a sense of loss. Well, that's certainly possible without volunteers! Current volunteers who are officers or part of committees can't do more and we need to have those additional volunteers. I know this sounds like a broken record but folks, wake up. We are pleading with people to step up voluntarily rather than

be coaxed to do something. After all, it's our chapter and that means all of us.

One additional volunteer that is needed from those of you that are GRHS members is that of chapter representative. GRHS includes a chapter representative for its board of directors. If you are interested, please contact me as we are one of very few chapters who do not have such representation. If you are computer savvy, you can attend the meetings from the comfort of your home. It's yet one more way to volunteer.

The current chapter officers will be meeting in October (when I'm writing this) and we'll see how our budget is looking and project what we need to do in calendar year 2009. The budget will be prepared for 2009 in a December board meeting and be ready for the membership to review and approve in our January meeting. Certainly the economy and how well people buy cookbooks, etc., does make a difference in how much money we have as an operation budget so we intend to do what is needed to assure that we are financially solvent. You can help by buying a cookbook at the next meeting, too; they do make great gifts and is an affordable item for all.

Membership-Plus Launched

Membership-Plus (MS-Plus) was successfully launched by AHSGR on May 30, 2008. Almost 100 AHSGR members are enjoying this new membership option. AHSGR members are invited to consider purchasing a MS-Plus subscription by taking advantage of an introductory offer - a subscription purchased in 2008 is good until January 1, 2010.

MS-Plus is a new enhancement to the on-line research aid Saving Our Ancestral Records (SOAR). MS-Plus adds to the value of an AHSGR membership by making available to the subscriber, at an additional annual fee of \$50, all of the AHSGR on-line SOAR research data and information with user enhancements not available to a member without MS-Plus.

(Membership Plus, continued on page 8)

A Visit to Ellis Island

By Bernie Becker

Roy and I stepped off the ferry onto Ellis Island on October 2, 2008. Throngs of tourists, of every tribe and nation, it seemed, stepped off with us. Our tour manager said, "Meet me at the ferry in one and one-half hours." How could we possibly absorb the fascinating displays throughout the beautifully renovated building in such a short time, we wondered when we stepped through the door.

The first display that caught our attention as we entered was a huge collection of unclaimed trunks, suitcases, satchels, and baskets. They looked nothing like luggage displays I had checked out at our local department store before our trip. They looked worn, battered, faded, well-used. We moved on to the next display, a huge picture of a crowd of men, women, and children, fresh off a ship, waiting to be processed. They, too, looked worn, battered, and well-used. I thought about what I had just read when I viewed the Statue of Liberty, the line from the Emma Goldman poem that reads, "Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Yes, Ellis Island is where those masses huddled.

I glanced at my watch. Time was fleeting. We had about forty-five minutes left to cover three floors of audio and visual displays, a gift shop, and archives. We decided to check out several displays, do a quick run-through of the gift shop, and head for the archives. How I longed for time to browse the books in the gift shop and find a special one for our North Star Library. But again, there wasn't time.

Alas, there was nothing to be achieved in archives with no reservation and so little time. We stepped out into the garden. There we saw the "Wall of Remembrance." For a

few people can place the name of their ancestor who came through Ellis Island. We met one of our tour ladies. "I found a name!" she exclaimed. "I have a rubbing of it." By this time, we did not have sufficient time to search the wall for our surnames.

It was time to head towards the ferry. Surrounded again by throngs of tourists of every tribe and nation, I looked towards Manhattan Island—so near and yet so far. I thought of how the millions who were processed in that building behind me must have looked at that shore, their hearts filled with hope for a new life. The ferry arrived. Like cattle, we were herded aboard. In just a few minutes our feet were on the other side, ready to board our motor coach.

Our coach drove past the hole where the gleaming Twin Towers once stood on the way to our hotel. We had a quick peak at the construction going on down there—a sobering view. It was the end of a working day, and not tourists, but workers of every tribe and nation crowded the streets and avenues. Taxis by the dozen played tag with our motor coach. America is still the land of huddled masses, I thought. They are still coming to our shores. No longer do they come through Ellis Island, but they still come with hopes and dreams for a better life.

I'm glad that we saw Ellis Island. We were *there*. But should you have the opportunity to make the trip, I'd recommend allowing yourself at least two days, one for the Statue of Liberty and one for Ellis Island. The ferry stops first at the Statue of Liberty. It is free to go up inside the Statue of Liberty, but you need a reservation. Make your reservations online at home. Security is tight since September 11, 2001. We had to go through security just like when getting on a plane before we could ride the ferry.

North Star Youth

By Gwen Schock Cowherd

Our youth now have the opportunity to attend a German immersion school. The Twin Cities German Immersion School, a tuition-free public charter school, is one of 14 Twin Cities immersion schools. The school attracts families with German heritage and those who see dual-language skills as an avenue to opportunity. German is the second most used language on the internet. A fifth of all books published in the world are in German. And, Germany is one of the largest economies in the world.

The school has 167 students in K-third grade with hopes of expanding to K-8. The school was recently assisted by a three-year \$450,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education Foreign Language Assistance Program which helped add two additional teachers. Contact: Twin Cities German Immersion School, 1745 University Ave., St. Paul, MN, <http://www.germanschool-mn.org>, phone: 651-492-7106.

GRHS Youth Essay Contest

In the 2008 contest, Alexandra Bettcher, granddaughter of North Star members Barbara and Gary Bettcher, was the second place middle school winner. Her picture appears on the GRHS youth webpage. Her success was also printed in her local newspaper *Pioneer Sun Patriot*. So, encourage qualified friends and family and let's get ready for another North Star affiliated winner in 2009. The deadline is March 20, 2009. The essay form is on the GRHS website: <http://www.grhs.org>

AHSGR Storytelling Contest

The 2009 AHSGR Storytelling Contest has divisions for both adults and youth. This contest has a division for age fourteen and under. Thus, an elementary student is qualified to enter the Youth Division. The deadline is March 1, 2009. The form can be

found on the AHSGR website:
<http://www.ahsgr.org>

Watch your mail for a special North Star Chapter mailing regarding Germans from Russia youth activity. For further info contact Gwen Schock Cowherd at gwensc@peoplepc.com or 651-426-0117.

Oh, How I Love to Schmeck!

By Gwen Schock Cowherd

Eureka, SD, sponsored their annual Schmeckfest on September 19-21, 2008, to celebrate the town's Germans from Russia heritage. My husband Phil and I attended to do what we enjoy the most – schmeck. And schmeck we did. Our schmeck began on Saturday at Eureka's Germans from Russia Pioneer Museum, where we went to take pictures of my Grandmother Mehlhaff's recently-donated pump organ. We also enjoyed the simulated barn scene with wood-carved animals and relocated church and school house. The museum folk served knoepfla soup, kuchen, and homemade butter with soda crackers. We ate the homemade butter, made on-site, without shame – cracker after cracker. It was soooo good! I almost didn't get any prune kuchen but they looked again and found one. I knew I was close to home when prune was in demand.

Next, we attended the quilt show, the parade, and an accordion concert in the historic Lyric Theater. In between activities, I found myself in the drug store confessing to the clerk, a recent Twin Cities transplant, regarding my butter indulgence. She assuaged my guilt by saying that I ate an all-natural product with no preservatives and not to give it a second thought! So, then it was on to the real **(Schmeckfest, continued on page 8)**

(Schmeckfest, continued from page 7)

schmeck at the high school auditorium where several hundred people were in attendance. We, along with my mother Florence Schock from nearby Leola and Ila Reich (a Eureka gal I met at the 2008 Casper, WY, Germans from Russia convention), conversed and giggled between swallows of sausage, strudels with potatoes, green beans, and kuchen. I, again, almost didn't get my prune kuchen but I held my breath and sure enough they found another one among the pile baked by the famous Eureka Kuchen Factory. Now that I think about it, I suppose I could have settled for peach but, I don't know, I wasn't in a compromising mood. It had been a long day. I wanted my prune. They delivered.

On Sunday we again drove from Leola to Eureka to schmeck at the Borscht Kettle restaurant where cucumber salad and halupsi were on the buffet menu. The potato salad was great. When it hit my tongue I sat up straight. I tried to dissect the ingredients. The dissection called for a second helping.

After the buffet, we headed to the Methodist Church for the afternoon German service. It

lots of maistub going on. A lady at our table exclaimed, "Uf dah!" My ears burned. I nicely stated that I thought we were in "ay yi yi!" territory. She told me she's originally from Colorado and not German-Russian but she's learning. I instantly forgave her.

Yes, it was indeed a Schmeckfest and a very very good one at that. I've already scheduled next year's on my calendar. Oh, how I love to schmeck!

(Membership Plus, continued from p. 5)

AHSGR MS-Plus subscriptions may be purchased on-line with a credit card by accessing the SOAR web-site. Processing of a subscription is automatic so access will be immediately available after submitting your order. You must have a SOAR User ID and password before purchasing a MS-Plus subscription. A MS-Plus subscription provides user access to all research materials available in SOAR with unlimited downloads of all databases. For more information, visit <http://www.ahsgrsoar.org>.

To Order More *Sei Unser Gast* Cookbooks

Share your German-Russian heritage with family and friends. *Sei Unser Gast* cookbooks make the perfect gift for birthdays, graduations, showers, weddings, anniversaries, and holidays. Give them to say "Danke schön." Donate copies to the libraries and schools in your community. *Sei Unser Gast* cookbooks are sold at some North Star Chapter meetings. To order by mail, complete the form below and mail it with a check payable to "North Star Chapter" (payable in U.S. dollars) and mail to: Cookbook Orders, North Star Chapter of Minnesota, P.O. Box 583642, Minneapolis, MN 55458-3642. Additional order forms can be printed from our website: www.northstarchapter.org

Name _____
St., Rt., P.O. Box _____
City _____
State/Province ZIP/Postal Code _____

Home Telephone Number (____) _____
Number of cookbooks being ordered _____
Total cost of books (see below) \$ _____
Postage/Shipping (see below) \$ _____
Total enclosed \$ _____

Cookbook Prices*

1 to 4 copies: \$12.95 each. 5 to 9 copies: \$11.95 each. Save! Buy 10 or more *Sei Unser Gast* cookbooks and pay only \$10.95 each.

Postage/Shipping

Only one mailing address per order, please.

1 to 4 books: \$2.50 per book (U.S.), \$5.75 (Canada)

5 to 9 books: \$2.00 per book (U.S.), \$4.50 (Canada)

10 or more books: \$1.50 per book (U.S.), \$4.00 (Canada)

*These are North Star Chapter prices. Other vendors may charge more or less for the book.

Thank Goodness We're Not Like Our Ancestors

by Cynthia Miller

My current reading has taken me to 1600s Massachusetts as the first American colonies are being established by the English religious group known as the Puritans. This is probably appropriate for this time of year, between Columbus Day and Thanksgiving. I ran across an interesting quote from Nathaniel Hawthorne, the great 19th century American writer, best known for his novel "The Scarlet Letter." Hawthorne descended from a man who had been a judge in the Salem witch trials, a fact that upset him enough nearly two hundred years later that he added a "w" to his last name to distance himself from that branch of the family.

Hawthorne appears to have struggled with a love/hate relationship with his Puritan ancestors, and wrote: "Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank Him, not less fervently, for being one step further from them in the march of ages."

It may seem disrespectful, even sacrilegious, to express such a thought as a German-Russian. Wasn't I raised to acknowledge, appreciate, and celebrate the incredible strength and struggles of my people? How could I even suggest that I should be glad not to be like them? But as I think about this, it occurs to me that I can be extremely thankful that my ancestors placed in front of me opportunities to be more and better than they ever dreamed possible.

I've always been personally proud of the fact that, although none of my grandparents spoke English as a first language, I was able to educate myself so that I now teach others the proper and creative use of the language. As far as education goes, I'm grateful that we are now past the German-Russian sentiment I once read that said higher education only leads to poverty and perversity. As a woman, I don't have to accept that my only use and duty should be to *kirche, kuchen, und kinder*, although I'm sure my grandmother would still like it if I were a better cook.

I don't have to worry about being shunned that I didn't marry a Lutheran, much less a German-Russian one. I can look at the nations of Russia and Germany, both historically and today, with a critical and open mind. My political beliefs don't have to be kept silent, or blindly follow those of my church, family, or town. As an American, I'm free to express whatever I wish.

So in these ways, while still grateful and proud to be a German-Russian descendant, I can also be happy that I'm not exactly like them, and my children will be even less so. We've had the opportunities others still dream of, we have fulfilled our ancestors' dreams of freedom and success, and we are free to create and follow our own dreams.

Happy Birthday

November: Norma Herrboldt, Chris Huber, Donna Pauley, Tom Schonebaum

December: Erma Lechko, Shirley Pfeifle, Cheryl Presler, Dayton Ward, Lil Ward, Elinor Wenzel

**North Star Chapter
of Minnesota-AHSGR and GRHS**
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2009 Membership Form

_____New _____Renew _____Individual _____Family

Name(s) _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip+4 _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Please note that a membership directory might be provided to North Star Chapter members that would include your name, address, phone, and email. If the chapter chooses to publish a membership directory:

____ I **agree** to have my name, address, phone and email in the published directory.
____ Please **exclude** my information from the published directory.

National Membership: ____AHSGR _____GRHS _____Both AHSGR and GRHS

Local dues are \$12.00 per year per family, plus membership in either AHSGR or GRHS.

AHSGR members please submit \$62 (\$50 for AHSGR, \$12 for North Star membership). GRHS members please submit \$12. GRHS requests that you send your national membership (\$40) to GRHS, 1125 W. Turnpike Ave., Bismarck ND 58501.

Please make your check payable to North Star Chapter and submit to:

Helen Kleingartner, 9513 Pierce St. NE, Blaine MN 55434 Questions: Contact Helen at 763-205-2297.

For newsletter greeting only: Birthday Month(s) _____ Wedding Anniversary Month _____