AHSGR contributes to “Unter unser Leit” exhibit

The historic migration of Germans to the Volga River region of Russia, and then to the plains of Kansas, is the subject of a special exhibit that opened Jan. 20 at the German-American Heritage Museum in Washington, D.C. It continues through March 23 before traveling to AHSGR headquarters in Lincoln, Neb., for an opening in April.

“Unter unser Leit: Finding Kansas’s Volga Germans” is intended as an introduction to the Volga-German story. As the exhibit brochure says, it “provides the visitor the unique opportunity to learn about a somewhat unfamiliar yet fascinating cultural group: the Volga Germans. The exhibit provides an exploratory, ethnographic account of an American immigrant group following their journey from German lands to the banks of the Volga River in 18th-century Russia, and then to the Kansas prairie a hundred years later. The conscientious visitor will draw parallels between the Volga Germans’ fascinating history and the stories of other American immigrant groups.”

Researched and curated by museum staff and volunteers, the exhibit involved the American Historical Society of Germans from America (AHSGR), as well as libraries, research institutions, heritage organizations and individuals from across the United States. AHSGR items loaned to the museum for the exhibit include: felt boots, a German Bible, a German Gesangbuch (songbook), a woman’s head scarf, a beet knife, a photo of a samovar, a wedding cane, a boy’s hat, Turkey Red wheat seeds, a recording of a German Russian band featuring a dulcimer, a copy of “The History of the Volga Relief Society” by Emma Schwabenland Haynes, a copy of “The Czar’s Germans” by Hattie Plum Williams and a copy of “Franz and Anna,” a coloring book featuring Kansas Volga Germans.

The exhibit was designed in honor of Philip F. Anschutz on the occasion of receiving the 2016 Distinguished German-American of the Year Award at the German-American Heritage Foundation’s 30th annual award ceremony. The Anschutz family exemplifies the Volga-German story.

“Unter unser Leit” continued on page 4
News from Headquarters

The year is off to a good start, although there have been changes and challenges. In December, Hannah Witt received an offer to work as a software designer, and Tom Ineck retired on March 16. Both did an excellent job. We are sad to see them go and miss them very much.

AHSGR is partnering with the German-American Heritage Museum in Washington, D.C., in its latest exhibit “Unter unser Leit: Finding Kansas’s Volga Germans,” which runs through March 23. We sent a variety of artifacts and are proud to have been asked to be a part of the endeavor. See details in the article on page 1.

Our museum’s “Faith of Our Families” exhibit will end soon. I love that it was a true collaboration among our chapters, who provided pictures and artifacts from Argentina, Canada and many states. It runs through March 31, to be replaced by a spring-summer exhibit highlighting German-Russian music, polka bands, dulcimers, accordions and more! We hope you can visit this fun exhibit.

On April 1, tours of out-buildings on our campus resume. That’s a sure sign that visitor traffic will increase, the weather will warm up, and summer will be near.

Here at HQ we are excited about our 48th Annual International Convention, Aug. 28-31 in Milwaukee, a city with a distinct German history. We have a great event planned. Visit www.ahsgr.org for updates on tours, speakers and events. An invitation with session information will be sent to members by May 1. Save the dates!

Spring meetings of the board of directors and foundation trustees are April 27-29 in Lincoln. Hard-working board members sacrifice their time, talents and financial resources to serve on our governing bodies. We owe them a huge thank-you!

In a recent, exciting development, we have added many newly acquired and translated research documents to our bookstore. And there are many more to come! For more details, see the Archives Committee article on page 9.

Check out the new series of Village Coordinators of the Month on our website. Each month VCs from two different regions will be profiled. This is a great way to learn more about our VCs and the excellent help they provide.

If you know anyone who has not renewed their membership, please encourage them to do so. A treasure trove of information awaits members on our website.

Please contact me with any questions, concerns, or kudos at sherry@ahsgr.org.

Vielen Dank!

Sherry
Sherry Pawelko, AHSGR Executive Director
Paul and Helen Hile, Ambassadors for the Society

One of my duties is to enlist families to highlight their German Russian legacy. I hope the Paul and Helen Hile Living Legacy will inspire others to help AHSGR flourish.

As a draft of the legacy says, the fund is being established “in memory and recognition of Paul and Helen, who have exemplified, through life and service, a desire to achieve their highest potential.” The Hiles “were dedicated to the cause of the organization of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. Their wisdom was accumulated from life, schooling, military service, government service, small business ownership, a loving and supportive marriage, national and international travel, and a fascination with genealogical research.”

The Paul and Helen Hile Living Legacy Fund will be held by IFAHSGR and invested by US Bank Private Investment Group. The fund will provide income to further the mission of AHSGR with projects chosen by the Membership Committee for programs to maintain membership. In 2005, Paul said, “Every member of AHSGR is asked to be an ambassador for the Society by promoting the benefits of membership and encouraging people to join our ranks.” Annual earning distributions from the legacy will begin when at least 50 percent of the fund has been received in contributions. It is hoped that the legacy will be fully funded with at least $50,000 in 10 years. Any balance may be funded through a donor’s will or trust.

The youngest daughter of Peter and Catherine (Huck) Neu, Helen was born in Batesland, S.D., in 1928, the 12th of 13 children. She was raised in western Nebraska, graduated from Broadwater High School and worked as a secretary in Scottsbluff, Neb. She developed a desire to preserve her family history and a keen interest in genealogy. To further her research, she became interested in AHSGR. Although Paul was not a GR, he also became active in AHSGR.

Born in Denver, Paul in 1952 received a bachelor’s degree in animal production from Colorado State University. After serving in the Army during the Korean War, he was an investigator for the Food and Drug Administration in Denver and Seattle. Helen and Paul met in Denver while both worked at the FDA. They married in 1961 and had two children, Karen and John, and two grandchildren.

Paul was the third-highest ranking official overseeing the FDA agencies regulatory duties from 1976 to 1986, receiving the FDA’s Award of Merit, the agency’s highest honor, and the Department of Health and Human Services’ Distinguished Service Award.

After leaving the FDA, he parlayed his experience into consulting, first with Hazleton Laboratories, a medical research firm and Phoenix Regulatory Associates, a consulting agency he helped founded. He retired in 2001.

The Hiles were charter members of AHSGR and Life Members since 1976. Paul was president of AHSGR and the IFAHSGR. He also was a friend who helped me at the U.S. Public Health Service, where I worked for 27 years.

Paul and I were founding members of the Nation’s Capital Area Chapter. Memorable experiences in the chapter included a visit with Dr. Karl Stumpp, when we sat at his feet and heard about the villages on the Volga. Chapter member Emma Schwabenland Haynes enlightened us about our relatives as if we were talking to one of them. She knew everything about the migration of GRs.

Paul was 79 when he died in 2010. Helen was 87 at the time of her death in March 2016. A detailed obituary of Helen ran in the Summer 2016 AHSGR Newsletter.

Some people change your life forever. Paul was one of these change agents. One could not be around him without knowing you were in the presence of someone of great significance. In my work as president of IFAHSGR I follow in his footsteps. He was part of our legacy.

Don

Don Soeken, IFAHSGR President
“Unter unser Leit” continued from page 1

beginning with Carl Anschutz, born in 1859 in the village of Niedermonjou. He relocated his family to North Central Kansas, where he became a successful businessman and founder of Farmers State Bank. His son Frederick Benjamin Anschutz continued in oil-drilling and ranching. Philip Anschutz bought his father’s drilling company, and extended his wealth in stocks, real estate, railroads and the entertainment industry.

In her introductory essay, “The Volga Germans: An American Tale,” researcher Rose Guardino writes, “Few contemporary Americans have heard of the Volga Germans. In the latter half of the 19th century, this immigrant group emigrated from rural southeastern Russia and settled in Kansas and other western reaches of the United States. Although the majority of U.S. history textbooks are devoid of any mention of the Volga Germans, the Volga-German tale is increasingly relevant to today’s discussions surrounding immigration. The quintessential American story—that of a population catalyzed to seek better opportunities by events in their homeland—is visible even in small, lesser-known immigrant groups such as the Volga Germans.”

As Guardino notes, “the increasingly hostile political climate in Russia was a determining factor in the Volga Germans’ decision to immigrate to the United States. Czar Alexander II revoked the military exemption that had been guaranteed to the Volga Germans in exchange for their dutiful cultivation of the land. Conscription into the Russian army carried with it the threat of conversion to Russian Orthodoxy and subsequent loss of Volga-German culture.” In response to these threats, many Volga Germans pursued freedom in the United States, including thousands who settled in Kansas and other Plains states such as Nebraska, Iowa, the Dakotas and Colorado.

“However, their trials were not over, as is often the case for recent immigrants,” Guardino writes. “Initially, many Kansans viewed the Volga Germans with suspicion and were less than welcoming. These new immigrants looked and spoke differently from other German immigrants, which confused the established population. Yet, over time, the Volga Germans won over their new neighbors with their work ethic, dedication to their faith, and commitment to public education.

Exhibit curator and researcher Tyler Grasee, in “Among Our People: The Exhibit,” cites the difficulty in researching Volga German family histories in the 20th century, following the dissolution of the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the turmoil of World War II. He notes that “the majority of the material for this exhibit was gathered from heritage organizations in the United States and Germany,” including AHSGR. Volga-German historian, educator and folklorist Dr. Timothy J. Kloberdanz made available a wealth of information that would otherwise have been lost to history, Grasee writes.

The exhibit’s name “Unter unser Leit,” represents a nuance of the Volga-German identity. In the dialect, it means “among our people” and was used in Russia to draw a symbolic barrier between the “insider” and the “outsider,” Grasee writes. The exhibit “seeks to highlight the complex nature of identity as it relates to ethnic heritage, and the surprisingly fluid manner in which immigrants may choose to navigate their identity in order to survive.”

Chronicling the Volga-German history, the exhibit’s seven chapters are titled “Genesis,” “Arrival in a New Land,” “Living by Faith,” “Six Days You Shall Labor,” “Not by Bread Alone,” “A Land of Milk and Honey,” and “Anschutz: A Family Legacy.”
The exhibit focuses on Kansas as representative of the greater migration of German Russians to North America and South America. Scouts from five German-Russian villages explored the American West in 1874 for the possibility of resettlement there. They were especially impressed by the newly admitted state of Kansas, with its prairie landscape that reminded them of the steppes of their Volga homeland. Among other factors that made Kansas an attractive destination for immigrants were the Homestead Act of 1862 and railroad marketing campaigns.

As the exhibit brochure notes, “Immigrants to Kansas remained largely separated by denomination as they transferred entire village populations from Russia to the U.S.” Whether Protestant, Catholic or Mennonite, they sought German-speaking ministers who “understood the nuances of their culture.” Even a generation or two after they immigrated, a marriage between couples from different Kansas towns was considered “intermarriage.”

Most immigrants to Kansas continued to work in agriculture, just as they had in Russia. Primarily raising wheat, they involved the whole family in a labor-intensive approach that proved fruitful, generating more than $1 million in revenue—equivalent to $21 million today—in the second half of 1874.

As in Russia, the labor of women was essential to the success of a Kansas farm. Women and children of all ages participated in the threshing of wheat. Women were responsible for the production of eggs and garden vegetables, selling what their families could not consume. Women also provided valuable health services, practicing midwifery as they had along the Volga. Many families hired out their daughters as farmhands, maids or nannies.

During World War I, anti-German sentiment was on the rise, forcing the new immigrants to cease speaking German in school, church or even at home. Pacifist Mennonites were persecuted for their anti-war sentiments or for refusing to buy war bonds. German-language newspapers and stores closed and many Volga Germans chose to keep their heritage a secret. Finally, the decline of German dialects in Kansas led to the establishment of AHSGR and other organizations to provide their members with opportunities for historical and genealogical research, serving as a bridge between the generations of immigrants who helped to build Kansas and their descendants.

Today, descendants of Kansas’s Volga Germans can be found throughout the United States and the world. Their productivity and resilience continue to add to America’s extensive and diverse culture of immigrant heritage.
2017 AHSGR Convention offers tours by bus and on foot

Plans for the 2017 AHSGR Convention, which will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Milwaukee Aug. 28-31, also include several tours by bus and on foot.

Two bus tours will be offered:

**Local German Heritage Bus Tour**
Departs the Hyatt at 9 a.m. Aug. 28. This is a German heritage and beer tour through Old World Third Street (Germantown), including the Pabst Mansion, Schlitz, Pabst and Blatz breweries. There will be a stop at Miller Brewing for a tour and tasting. Lunch will be served at the historic Mader’s Restaurant, offering classic German cuisine, Bavarian décor and traditionally attired wait staff. The bus returns to Hyatt at 1:30 p.m. Cost: $52 per person.

**Old World Wisconsin Bus Tour**
Departs the Hyatt on Aug. 29 at 8:45 a.m. This tour travels to Old World Wisconsin with German immigration and beer history narration along the way. It includes an 80-minute, narrated tram tour of the historic property (admission included). Lunch will be served at the Clausing Barn Café after the tram tour. The bus returns to Hyatt at 1:15 p.m. Cost: $58 per person.

In addition, there will be several walking tours:

**German Heritage (Aug. 28, 10 a.m.)**
Old World Third Street has buildings from the late 1800s with a distinctly Teutonic flavor. Learn about businesses and locales that were instrumental in making the city into a “Deutsche Athens.” 1½-2 hours

**Riverwalk (Aug. 28, 1:30 p.m.)**
Discover the design concepts used to create the Riverwalk’s path and enjoy sculptures dotting the landscape. This tour also highlights the architecturally significant buildings that flank the Milwaukee River. 1½-2 hours

**Historic Milwaukee’s Downtown (Aug. 29, 10 a.m.)**
This unique tour of our most prestigious downtown buildings starts at the Plankinton Building and ends at the Milwaukee Art Museum to view its stunning new architecture. This tour is best enjoyed at full length (2 hours), but can be condensed to 1 to 1½ hours.

Walking tour fees are $10 for adults, $2 for those under 17.

The convention program’s theme is “The Coming Storm.” It will focus on the life of the colonies from 1763 to 1917 and how the Russian Germans reacted to the coming storm of World War I and the civil war. Topics will include the history of Russian Germans in many areas of the Russian Empire, including Siberia. Speakers have been invited from both Russia and Germany.

The Hyatt Regency is conveniently located in downtown Milwaukee, within walking distance of many local attractions, including nationally famous German restaurants and a German sausage store.

The hotel is 10 miles from General Mitchell International Airport. Shuttle services are available. Overnight parking is $5 a day, with in-and-out privileges. A discount of 20 percent on daily parking, currently $31, has been negotiated. Hotel reservations will open six months before the convention. Rates are $139 for single or double occupancy.

For the latest details on convention speakers and other related events, visit www.ahsgr.org. An invitation with session information will be sent to members by May 1.
Tim and Rosi Kloberdanz establish endowed scholarship

To promote increased awareness of folklore and ethnic heritage, a new endowed scholarship has been established at North Dakota State University (NDSU) in Fargo. Dr. Tim Kloberdanz and Rosalinda Kloberdanz, long-time AHSGR members and Germans from Russia researchers, created the scholarship for university students.

The **Timothy J. and Rosalinda Kloberdanz Cultural Heritage Scholarship** will be available to qualified undergraduate students. The first award is scheduled to be made in Spring 2017. Those applying must be enrolled in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at NDSU. Preference will be given to student applicants who show evidence of coursework or research experience in folklore, cultural anthropology, sociology, cross-cultural communication, modern languages, or other subject areas relating to cultural or ethnic heritage. Students with a strong interest in German-Russian culture and folklore will be among those able to apply for the scholarship.

The Kloberdanzes have lived and worked in North Dakota since 1976. Dr. Kloberdanz taught anthropology and folklore at NDSU for more than 30 years, instructing some 8,000 students. One of the special classes he developed was a 15-week “Germans from Russia” course that was taught evenings and proved very popular.

Rosalinda Kloberdanz worked in information technology at NDSU for many years and later served as an IT executive director and assistant CIO for the North Dakota University System (NDUS). Along with her husband, she also did extensive German-Russian research and published a number of books, articles, and essays. In addition, the Kloberdanzes worked on CD albums and public television documentaries that related to folklore and ethnic heritage.

Most of the initial funds for the new endowed scholarship were generated by royalties from a book co-authored by Dr. Kloberdanz in 2010. The award-winning volume, *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*, will be reprinted by the North Dakota Council on the Arts in 2017. The book includes numerous color photographs and examples of German-Russian folklore, including family stories, proverbs, folk medicine, weather lore, and traditional recipes.

“From 1976 to 2010, many students helped collect and document an incredibly wide range of folklore,” writes Dr. Kloberdanz. “It was a tremendous effort that resulted in the preservation of a lot of folklore that otherwise might have been lost to posterity. The new scholarship is a way of giving something back to the students. It is also a way of encouraging and actively promoting the future study of folklore, ethnic traditions, and cultural heritage.”

Those interested in making charitable contributions to the new Kloberdanz scholarship fund can do so by writing to The NDSU Foundation, P.O. Box 5144, Fargo, North Dakota 58105-5144.
Genealogy Guys co-host shares ideas for research trips

Summer is just around the corner, the perfect time for taking road trips, including journeying to record repositories and libraries. Co-host of The Genealogy Guys podcast and author Drew Smith shares some thoughts about how to best plan for research trips:

In a time when documents from all over the world are being digitized and made available to us in online databases, we might not spend much time thinking about the need to travel to physical repositories, near and far. Libraries, archives, courthouses, cemeteries and churches continue to hold materials that may never be scanned during our lifetimes, and this means that eventually we genealogists need to pack up our travel kits and hit the road for hours, days or even weeks to accomplish our research goals.

But before you put the first piece of clothing in a suitcase—or even worry about which chargers to bring—you need to do a few things before planning that research trip:

1. Do as much online research as you can. There is no point in wasting a single moment of precious research trip time in viewing materials that we could have seen from the comfort of our own research workspace at home.

2. Learn all you can about each repository’s online catalog, including how to use it. This will help you not only do preparatory research, but also make you proficient in check-

Options for sending obituary clips

If you have newspaper obituaries for processing, send them to AHSGR-Obits, 631 D St., Lincoln, NE 68502-1149. If possible, copy them onto an 8½-by-11-inch sheet of paper (portrait orientation) and write or type the name and date of the publication at the top of the sheet, or tape the obituary to an 8½-by-11-inch sheet of paper (portrait orientation) with the name and date at the top. You may also mail the clipping with the name and date of publication indicated on the obituary. If the obituary will not fit on one page, number the pages. If you have obituaries in digital form, e-mail them to Mike Meisinger at mrm1970@aol.com. Include the name and date of the publication. For example: Scottsbluff Star Herald, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, July 22, 2014.

When you’re done with all of this pre-trip research work, you’re finally ready to create your research itinerary, book your flights and hotels, and think about what to pack. Learn more about planning research trips and organizing your travel in Drew Smith’s book Organize Your Genealogy: Strategies and Solutions for Every Researcher.
Archives Committee’s mission is securing records

By Kevin Rupp
Chair, Archives Committee

If you read the Archives Committee annual report, you know that our committee is one of the most active AHSGR committees. It can also be one of the costliest. While striving to get documents that might tell the history of Unsere Leute with its different types of German-Russian—Don Germans, Volga Germans, Volhynians and those who were deported to Siberia—we also must access those church and civil records that everyone is interested in.

We could not even begin to tap the Russian Archives for all this information without the financial help of many people. At present, we have one foundation, one bequest and a smattering of small village donations to help us achieve this goal. This article to designed to inform our members what we are working on.

To date, the Montania bequest is the largest we have received. The bequest asked that we get everything possible on the area of Shcherbakovka and her daughter colonies. Recent acquisitions from this area include copies of births, marriages and deaths. All these items are placed in a black binder at AHSGR for members to do research. Rosenberg is another village that we are checking on.

The other area that we have been working on is the Kukkus Kanton. We have acquired birth, marriage and death records and some family lists from the villages of Dinkel, Jost, Kukkus, Lauwe, Stahl-am-Tarlyk, Straub, and Warendburg. You may already have seen some of the finished documents that have come out and been made available to members. If not, check the AHSGR Online Store.

In addition to the large donations, we also have received funds to get information from the colonies of Dobrinka, Alt-Doenhof, Gnadenau, Neu-Doenhof Herzog, Obermunjou, and Schoenchen.

We have been working on getting church records out for Alt-Doenhof and Neu-Doenhof. Many thanks to LeeAnn Schlager, who helped to get donations for these two villages. Most of these documents have not been translated. We are reviewing them before they are finalized into a completed monograph. Donations are still needed for the Alt-Doenhof records, but we are on the right path.

Getting donations for all these records is only half of the struggle. We also need reliable people to translate these records. Sometime we have to pay for these services based on the condition of the documents, and some done by volunteers. AHGR’s primary goal is to acquire these records, translate them and make them available to our members. If you want to donate to any of these projects, or perhaps a different village, please contact me.

I hope to make this a regular column to inform members about our progress. Items recently made available in our online and headquarters store include: 1794-1825 Laub, Tarlyk, Russia Birth Records; 1917 New Messer, Russia Family List; 1920 Schoenchen, Paninskaya, Russia, Family List for General Labor Duty; and 1879-1912 Herzog, Saratov (Volga), Russia Family List, the 1886 Lauwe, Samara (Volga) Russia Family List, the 1874 Warenburg, Saratov (Volga) Russia Family List, Volumes 1 & 2. This could not have been possible without donations.

On another note, if you have any of the Pleve Family Charts, please give a copy to AHSGR so we can preserve these important charts for years to come. Of the 633 Pleve charts, we have about 333. If you want more information on these charts or what to know if we have a copy of your chart, contact Diane Wilson at AHSGR.
Autobiography should strike a familiar chord with GRs


Reviewed by Bob Meininger
Emeritus Professor, Nebraska Wesleyan University

The author of this entertaining and reflective autobiography, Loren Schmidtberger, started life as a son of Volga German farmers in Ellis County, Kan., during the hard years of the Dust Bowl.

His memories of that time are not at all lacking in love and happiness as a young farm boy whose significant experiences, among others, involved his early assignment to a certain cow to be milked as part of his daily chores. He tells of these events and the persons around him in short chapters told with humor and insight. And, in a significant way, his story is very much the same as a large number of children growing up in a German Russian family, rural or even urban—at that time, or a little later.

Readers with a somewhat similar background will identify with and savor the anecdotes, people and experiences, starting with childhood on a small farm and going through schooling, military service, marriage and career. These include classrooms, friends, cars, the army, family life, and a career as professor of English literature on the East Coast.

A few examples of the short chapters include topics such as drought, dust storms, depression, family members, grandmother’s ghost, bilingual cows, Pearl Harbor day memories, college, reflections on a life, dialect samples, and a number of others.

The delightful collection of reflections on the life of the writer provide an interesting and very readable panorama, as well as a source of knowledge of a way of life of a representative group of German-speaking immigrants from Southern Russia, which is highly typical of the members of AHSRG, some of whom can remember the same experiences and from which younger descendants can enjoy and profit from reading about the lives of their forebears.

In the writer’s own words: “Much of the world I speak of in these essays no longer exists. The Volga German communities in Central Kansas have long since been fully assimilated into American life. Cows are milked by machines these days and family farms are giving way to agribusiness… Still, it is useful to visit a time when we were so isolated out on the prairie…”

These are among many other good reasons to pick up this little book.
Books and other materials added to AHSGR library

These books and other materials have been added to the AHSGR Research Library in Lincoln. For new additions as they become available, go to www.ahsgr.org and click on the AHSGR Library tab.

- Shcherbakovka Lutheran Church: Birth Records, 1809-1867, extracted by Janet Laubhan Flickinger
- Shcherbakovka Lutheran Church: Death Records 1809-1867, extracted by Janet Laubhan Flickinger
- Shcherbakovka Lutheran Church: Marriage Records 1809-1867 and 1894-1895, extracted by Janet Laubhan Flickinger
- A Time for Reflection: The First One Hundred Years: Germans from Russia in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 2016 update and reprint, donated by Bill Doos
- Die Kolonie Kamenka an der Wolga, by Albert Obholz and Emma Rische, donated by Kevin Rupp
- Johann Heinrich Richter, by Ward R. Richter, donated by the author
- Pioneering for Christ in Western Canada, by Ernest George Goos
- Canada District, American Lutheran Church: Jubilee Yearbook 1958
- Kesslers and Sahlis: Ancestors and Descendants, by S. Ann Kessler, donated by the author
- Traudt Family Register, compiled by Carole M. Hayden, donated by Carole Hayden
- Exodus to a Land of Promise: History, Memories, and Genealogy of the Michael and Katharina Schreiner Haas Family, by Julian L. Haas, donated by the author
- Heinrich Family History, by Brad Hertz, donated by the author
- Memo E. and Esther Unruh Schmidt: A Family History, by Jan C. Niles, donated by Clarence and Gladys Niles
- My Trek with Divine Destiny: A Memoir, by Horst Hehr, donated by the author
- Peppernuts, Plain and Fancy, by Norma Jost Voth, illustrated by Ellen Jane Price, donated by Karen Penner
- Russia’s Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914-22: Book 2, The Experience of War and Revolution, edited by Adele Lindenmeyer, Christopher Read, and Peter Waldron
- Der Lohn für die Treue: Geschichte der Wolgadeutschen, by Robert Korn, 2015 edition, donated by Eric Schmaltz
- Mein Herz blieb in Russland: Russlanddeutsche erzählen aus ihrem Leben; 34 Geschichten und Berichte von Zeitzeugen, edited by Larissa Dyck and Heinrich Mehl
- Sword and Plowshare, by Arthur Grenke, donated by the author
- Eckerdt-Schutz Families, Adventures: Germany, Russia, U.S.A., by Ron Knappen, donated by William Doos
- Some Germans from Russia who Applied for Citizenship in Sheboygan County, Wis., by Ronald J. Ertel, donated by Peter and Judy Kaland
- Light on the Prairie: Solomon Butcher, Photographer of Nebraska’s Pioneer Days, by Nancy Plain, donated by Robert Meininger
- Bill and Ella, by Dale W. Hohnstein, donated by the author
- J. H. Yost, Lumberman Extraordinary, by Dale W. Hohnstein, donated by the author
- My Hand Shudders and My Heart Has Wept: Jakob Rady…1961, compiled by Patti Hildenbrandt, donated by Edna Rady
- Conversations with the Elders: Personal Stories of Soviet Labor Camp Survivors, by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer with Sister Mary Elise Leiker
- Remembering Volhynia: A Memoir About German Russians, by Irene Nickelburg
- So Much Love to Give: Memoirs of Juanita Moore, by Theresa L. Moore, donated by the author
- Escaping Russia: Revised Author’s Edition of A Man Called Andreas, by Andrew Kronenberger, donated by the author
- Colony of Gross-Werder (Revizskaya Skazka), 1850 Revision List, donated by Wes and Paulette Kohlman
- Colony of Gross-Werder (Revizskaya Skazka), 1858 Revision List, donated by Wes and Paulette Kohlman
Hannah’s Helpful Hints: Shopping the AHSGR Online Store

By Hannah Witt, AHSGR Administrative Assistant

Hello and welcome to the spring 2017 edition of “Hannah’s Helpful Hints!” Today we take a look at the AHSGR online store. AHSGR sells translated records, censuses, surname charts, historical monographs, novels, DVDs, and more to help you with research and celebrate GR history and culture.

With the online store, you no longer need to write or call headquarters to place an order or inquire about the price of an item. The online store automatically gives you your member discount, as long as you log in to your member account. That discount can be as much as half off the price of a surname chart. It also applies to 2017 Convention tickets, so be sure you log in!

The online store is easy to find. Navigate to ahsgr.org and find the “Online Store” tab between “Donate” and “Publications.” A click on the tab will take you to the online store, where you will see featured items, usually new publications or items that we think will be of particular interest to our members. If you click one of those, it will take you to the item.

You can also search for a keyword, a specific item, or an entire category of items by using the search bar underneath the featured items. Click the arrow on the drop-

down menu that reads “all categories” to pick a category to search in, or type a keyword or a title into the blank space and click “find” to search for an item.

If you want to browse a category, you can do that too! For example, if you want to look through all of our surname charts, click “Surname Charts” in the drop-down menu and leave the space blank where you would normally type a keyword. The store will show you all items in the surname charts category.

Click on the item you want. There will be an image of the item—if one is available—a description of the item, and the price. If you’re logged in, your member price should show in red. If you do not see that, make sure you’re logged in. Click the “Add Item” button and the product will be placed in your cart.

You can go to your cart to check out then, or you can keep looking for more things you might be interested in. AHSGR is always researching, translating, and publishing new materials for our members, so check every once in a while and see if there’s anything new of interest!

Editor’s Note: This is the final installment of “Hannah’s Helpful Hints.” We will continue with a series of “Helpful Hints from HQ.”
Revised 2016 Clues now available to members online

Changes in information for entries in the 2016 Clues are listed below, alphabetically by last name. The 2016 Clues was published in December. A revised edition is at www.ahsgr.org under the Publications tab on the homepage.

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- Sue Nakaji, email address: Susan.nakaji@sbcglobal.net
- Kathy Stahlman, VC for Awilovo and Erlenbach, zip code: 78154
- Vikilyn Strong, S095, 2715 E. Banbury Road, Salt Lake City UT 84121-4107, email address: bstrong8@hotmail.com. Ancestral names: Eckhardt, Bretthauer, Gutmann, Getmann, Zeiler and Woit. Ancestral villages: Brunnental, Frank and Walter.
- Gracie Wilhelm, W022

Nominations for AHSGR awards and citations due May 1

AHSGR members are urged to nominate their fellow members for the society’s annual service award and special citation. Winners are selected by the Membership Committee and approved by the Executive Committee. Both awards can be given posthumously. Consider nominating someone by May 1 for one of these awards.

The AHSGR Distinguished Service Award is the highest award the Society can bestow on a member. It honors and celebrates service that has made a positive impact on the Society or the International Foundation in advancing their goals. Examples of meritorious service include helping to form a new chapter, serving on either the Society or the Foundation board of directors, serving as an officer or committee chair, participating in fund raising, writing or publishing information about Germans from Russia, and serving as a Village Coordinator or a volunteer at the AHSGR Heritage Center in Lincoln.

The AHSGR Special Citation recognizes an outstanding act or continued superior performance in support of the Society or Foundation mission. The award may be given to an employee, an AHSGR member, or an individual or business organization friend of AHSGR. Examples of meritorious performance include outstanding performance by a Society employee, outstanding performance as a volunteer, or extraordinary financial support.

Any AHSGR member in good standing may submit one or more nominations. Nominations should be sent to: Chair, Membership and Public Affairs Committee, AHSGR, 631 D Street, Lincoln, NE 68502-1199. You can also send them by email attachment to ahsgr@ahsgr.org.
Headquarters News

AHSGR members honor—and share—family histories

By Karen Soeken
Chair, Membership/Public Affairs Committee

Yesterday I visited a friend in a rehabilitation center who shared with me that although her grandparents lived across the street from her when she was growing up, she knew very little about her family. All she knew was that they came from Germany.

That got me to thinking about what I know about my own ancestors and especially the role that AHSGR has played in that knowledge and understanding. AHSGR not only helped to fill in gaps about family members and find new branches of the family, it also helps me to better understand my family.

When Grandpa Fischer first met my husband, he took one look and said, “Volga Deutsch.” I wondered how he could know that—and then I attended an AHSGR convention where everyone looked like a relative! An AHSGR convention is like a family reunion because of our shared history, but also because many of us find that we are related.

Grandma told the story of having to stand on the back of a wagon and hold up items that were for sale as they prepared to move from Krasnojar to Michigan. She mentioned how hard it was to hold up her brother’s black boots, which he had asked them not to sell. I had no idea about black boots—until I saw a pair at the AHSGR museum. Suddenly I could picture that 12-year old girl holding up her brother’s boots. When I learned about the living conditions of our GR ancestors through AHSGR Work Papers, I understood why her family was so close-knit. Then later a folklore presentation helped to explain why my grandparents were reluctant to talk about what happened within the family.

The move to Michigan was not easy for a 12-year-old girl and her nine-year-old brother and mother. Like most of our ancestors, they couldn’t speak English when they arrived, and they were called “dirty Rooshians.” When I told Grandma I wanted to get a copy of her birth record, she asked me not to because “they” might make her go back. I puzzled over that until I read in one of the AHSGR books that many of our ancestors got permission to go to the United States with the understanding they would return within a certain number of years.

So many things I have come to understand about my family and background because of AHSGR. I’m sure you agree. It is important that we not lose our story and our past and that we share it with others. Knowing the past helps us understand and value the present. “Studies show that sharing family history helps younger generations form a sense of identify and self-awareness that builds confidence and creates an improved ability to cope with stress and trauma,” writes Kimberley Fowler at www.aplaceformom.com.

Membership in AHSGR is one way that I honor my grandparents and those before them. Sharing “my” story with others and encouraging them to be on the AHSGR journey with me is a way to Keep our Heritage Alive.

AHSGR membership levels have changed. We urge you to join or renew your membership online at www.ahsgr.org. On the Membership page under About Us, you will find details on the new, simplified membership levels and benefits and a downloadable, fillable membership application form. Simply type directly onto the PDF form on your screen, save it on your hard drive and e-mail it to headquarters as an attachment. You can also complete the form, print it and mail to headquarters.
Welcome to our newest members who joined between Nov. 16, 2016 and Feb. 15, 2017. If someone lives close to you give them a call and personally welcome them to AHSGR. Don’t forget to invite them to your chapter meeting!
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Vincent, Kan., famous for St. Boniface Nativity scene

Sunflower Chapter, Hays, Kan.
By Judy Hoffman, Secretary

If you are ever in the vicinity of Victoria, Kan., during the Christmas season, you are urged to come to Vincent, a small village nearby. There you will find a most elaborate and extensive display for the Nativity scene. The Sunflower Chapter held its December banquet meeting in Vincent, delighting in the newly constructed St. Boniface parish hall, which easily seated the 51 people who attended.

The parish of St. Boniface Catholic Church was established in 1907, but it had no parish hall until recently. Parish activities had to be held outdoors in the summertime. Work began a year ago on the long-awaited parish hall, after two fundraisers and a letter campaign for donations. Most labor was donated. Every day, eight to 10 farmers worked on it between fall harvest and calving. For fundraising, the 40 families of parishioners sold German food at Herzogfest (an annual fundraiser in Victoria). At the last Herzogfest they sold 44 roasters of German food.

Three years ago, parishioners also began remodeling the rectory, which was built in 1918. Traveling priests can stay there free of charge. The school house was built in the 1960s and is open two weeks a year for visitors. The first teachers in the school were nuns from Concordia, Kan. It is now occupied and most of the furnishings are still there.

In 1907, St. Boniface church construction began. Three families donated 15 acres to the parish. Eight founding families quarried and delivered limestone to the church site. Realizing the extreme effort required to quarry the rock, the families decided a rock foundation was sufficient and built the rest of the church of wood. It took a great deal of effort to get the bishop’s permission to build the church. Incidentally, the town was named Vincent after the first pastor. St. Boniface is the patron saint of Germany.

Father Callistus Rectenwald was pastor for 52 years, from 1928 until his death in 1980. A Capuchin priest, he was born in Pittsburgh. In 1927, he started his famous nativity scene with just a crib and nativity set. He made the crib and manger from a local pear tree. Every year he made something new to add to it, then asked parishioners to identify what was new. The display would be taken down after the Feast of the Three Kings, or Epiphany.

As the years passed, it became more elaborate. Father Callistus gathered pebbles from the road out front, carefully choosing the sizes, and used them to construct a huge assortment of buildings and bridges in the display. He also asked anyone who traveled to bring back a stone for his nativity scene. Over the years he accumulated stones from every state and 113 countries, including rocks from war zones where troops were stationed and from missionaries he wrote to for stones. He labeled each one accordingly. You could read the small print on individual stones to determine where they had come from. Father told people that the stones were his way of bringing the world together.

The famous Nativity scene at St. Boniface was begun in 1927.
Chapter News

St. Boniface Nativity scene continued from page 19

St. Boniface Church in Vincent, Kan., the “Pearl of the Prairie.”

er to celebrate Christmas.

The extensive display also depicts “The Twelve Days of Christmas” among the figurines. It is challenging to find them all, but a guide helps with that. There are barns, sheds, chicken coops, the Bethlehem Inn—a wide range of construction, all by Father Callistus.

It takes three days to put the display up. Today, children do most of the work. They watched their dads put it up through the generations. They create the set, which includes running water and lighting. The youngsters provide the agility and creativity, especially appreciated when you realize the display is of considerable height.

Father Callistus also made rosaries and thousands of cribs. He worked on them all year long, and sold them at Christmas approached. Just before he passed away, he was in and out of the hospital and the rest home. In fact, he was in the hospital on Easter Day 1980. He said he wanted to be of service until he died. A week after Easter, he had just finished Mass at St. Boniface, genuflected, took two steps, collapsed and died.

On June 11, St. Boniface parish will celebrate its 110th anniversary.

Denver Metro Chapter

By Shirley Wilcoxon, President

We had a great year, starting with our annual business meeting and potluck luncheon in February, followed by a wonderful Mai Fest luncheon at Pinehurst Country Club in May. Shirley Wilcoxon traveled to Hays, Kan., in June for the Center for Volga German Studies (CVGS) all-day conference for the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the villages of Degott, Graf, Herzog, Katharinenstadt, Louis, Mariental, Rohleder, Schuck, and Volmer.

Pat and Norman Reisch, Barbara and Nick Bretz, Gwen Mayer, Sam Dreith, Delores Tippett, Shirley Wilcoxon, Mary Jane Bolton, Michael Fyler, and Lowell Grauberger attended the annual AHSGR Convention in Concord, California in July, where Sam Dreith was honored with the Distinguished Service Award. The CVGS had a conference in Fort Collins celebrating the 250th Anniversary of Donhof and Messer in July. We had opportunities to attend the German Fest Denver at Heritage Amusement Park, the Orthodox Food Festival and Old Globeville in July, and our annual summer picnic in August.

In September, Shirley Wilcoxon attended the Kansas Round-up and we elected our 2017 officers at our Harvest Fest potluck, where we also watched the newly released Norka film. In October, new board members Delores Tippett and Shirley Wilcoxon attended the AHSGR board meetings in Lincoln, Neb., along with trustees Sam Dreith and Corinne Koehler, Gwen Mayer and her son, Steve. We delighted the residents at the Argyle with our annual Christmas cookies and caroling party, complete with Santa Claus (Al Miller) and ended the year with a catered Christmas luncheon.

Our chapter joined the Colorado Council of Genealogical Societies (CCGS), giving us a chance to network with 30 other organizations and promote the benefits of joining AHSGR. We attended a workshop as a gold sponsor, highlighting our chapter with a display table, handouts, a full-page ad and logo in the syllabus, logo in other handouts, flyers in all the goodie bags, and a presentation of our chapter at the opening ceremonies. We attended “best practices” seminars for chapter leaders.

We had eight History/Culture/Genealogy meetings
Chapter News

throughout the year. Subjects included DNA 101, a story-telling day, Terry Batt’s slide show of the early U.S. settlements, Lou Gibson’s slide presentation on migration patterns, and Maria Serendinski’s childhood experiences living through the horrors of prison camps. We watched the video of the “Making of the Statue of Liberty,” Monica Ruhl shared a DVD presentation of the “History of Germans in Czechoslovakia” and their expulsion at the end of WWII and told us about her life in Europe and her migration to the U.S.A. Gisela Hauert described how her parents met and married in Germany after the war and immigrated to the states as displaced persons. Her father was a Volga German and her mother was a Black Sea German.

We were saddened by the passing of several chapter members, including Bruce Clifford Goral, son of past President Verna Goral, Lou Gibson, Rod Uhrich, John Traudt, Armn “Rocky” Frankenbery, Thelma Diedrichs, Mary Theresa Dixon, and Robert Stapp. May they rest in peace.

Our newsletters spotlighted Lou and Darlene Gibson, Larry and Patricia Winter, the journey of Jacob and Anna Lis Kissler from Frank, Russia, to the United States in 1913, Sam Dreith’s biography and highlights of his program at the Argyle in 2011.

We have been successful in attracting new members to our chapter through word of mouth, personal invitations, and promotions through Facebook. Our Facebook page “likes” have grown from 36 to 1,030. A membership promotion by Shirley Wilcoxon, who offered to pay one year’s Chapter dues of $10 for new members, reached a potential of 100,000 people. New members are Sonny and Rebecca Cordova, Barbara McMillan, Virginia Engleman, Robert and Dixie Yergert, Carol and Patrick Quinlan, Carol and Kenneth Norberg, Pat Wales, George Haberkorn, Ron Herdt, Dodie Rotherham, Shirley Shipman, Shirley Baumgartner Bentley, Paul and Annette Fast, Gisela Hauert, and Walter Keller.

We had two successful Bierocks/Krautburgers bake-off fundraisers. Shorthanded for the spring bake-off, we called on you for the fall bake-off and you came through. This fundraiser is the life blood of our organization.

Bob and Ailene Munger have been invaluable in chronicling our events with photographs and more than 80 display boards. They brought all of the boards to our spring bake-off, where they were photographed for posterity.

A debt of appreciation goes out to all of you – Chapter members, officers, committee people, board members, trustees, volunteers, family members, and friends. Your continued support and participation, in person or in spirit, are what keeps the Denver Metro Chapter successful in preserving and keeping alive the history and culture of our ancestry. Please continue to provide your positive, critical, and suggestive feedback. It is the only way we know what we are doing right and what we could do better.

Denver Metro Chapter members gather for a Beirock/Krautburger bake-off, a fundraiser that is the life blood of the organization.
Intermountain Chapter, Utah
By Dee Hert, Newsletter Editor

Inspired by the world-famous German Christmas markets in Frankfurt, Germany, a similar experience was created in 2012 in Salt Lake City. A charming tradition, the market is successful due to a team of dedicated volunteers and donations from community sponsors. Visitors can purchase food and unique products while enjoying festive holiday entertainment.

A primary goal of the Christkindlmarkt SLC is to focus on the principle of giving to others and celebrating that service. The market is based on the German story of St. Martin, who was known to cut his cloak in half and share the warmth with a beggar. The signature events of the market are the daily children’s parades honoring St. Martin and the children’s groups who participate in an act of service before the market. The event’s slogan is, “Putting the KIND in ChristKINDlmarkt.”

The Utah-based Intermountain Chapter applied and was accepted to participate in the market in 2015 and 2016. We ordered Russian-themed Christmas decorations, which were adorable, and nearly everything sold.

The primary goal was to make the community aware of the unique Germans from Russia culture. We displayed numerous maps and educational materials to draw attention to our cause.

Many curious people stopped to inquire about “Germans from Russia.” Just what did that mean? Fortunately, we also had folks in disbelief and said they were GRs. We heard many personal stories of their heritage, such as villagers making tunnels under the snow to facilitate mobility. The look of relief on faces when we offered free assistance with their research was reward for all.

One new exciting feature to our area was members of our newly formed Youth Group, who facilitated engagement of the public and handed out free reindeer food. It was heartwarming to watch happy smiling youth engage the crowd—priceless!

Chapter members came forward and offered to work in the booth while others took a break to warm up. It was much appreciated. We have a marvelous group of chapter members.

We are looking forward to participating in the market next year. I have numerous thoughts for improvement.

Each community hosts various cultural events. Utah’s Scottish festival, held during the summer, is our next adventure. Numerous cultures are represented and FamilySearch is one of the vendors.
Central California Chapter
By Connie Coberly, 1st Vice President

On Jan. 22 the Central California Chapter of the AHSGR held their annual meeting at the Fort Washington Country Club. This event was started several years ago by a member of our chapter who was also a member at Fort Washington. He urged us to come and enjoy the wonderful food and great service of their “Champagne Brunch.” We’ve held our annual meeting there ever since.

After the benediction, we rushed to the buffet line to make our choices from all the delicious offerings there. When we finished eating and catching up with our tablemates the meeting was opened with the flag salute. Our president Patti Kelly gave us an overview of our activities in 2016 and drew our attention to financial papers and minutes of a previous meeting that were on the tables. Then she introduced our speaker, story teller Mike Newkirk.

Mike presented a story he had written about the life of one of our favorite volunteers, the late Dennis Ohlberg. Dennis was the “German Sausage King” to many people in Fresno. He was also the king of volunteers, taking part in many fund raisers for German from Russia organizations. For our group, he was there for yard sales, noodle-making, showing the children at our youth camp how to make sausage and, most importantly for us, our bierock-making. He didn’t just come when we assembled and baked bierocks, he was in on the ordering, the cooking and shredding of the meat, cabbage, and onions, through the entire process. Dennis and his wife, Alberta, faithfully attended our dinner meetings. He helped entertain at our Oktoberfest one year. In a mock wedding, he dressed as the bride and marched down the aisle with his handsome groom. Dennis was over six feet tall, and his groom was a 5’2” woman, Vera Hills. We shared stories of Dennis and we had a story board of pictures taken as he worked.

Northern Colorado Chapter
By Cheryl Glanz, 1st Vice President

The Moon Theatre Company announces an encore production of “Beets,” a two-act original play by local playwright Rick Padden that premiered at Loveland’s Rialto Theater eight years ago to sold-out crowds. “Beets” is historical fiction inspired by actual events that took place at the height of WWII, when Berthoud, Colo., sugar beet farmers were facing a record harvest with a shortage of field workers. Over 3,000 German POWs being held at Camp 202 near Greeley provided a solution, but the presence of German soldiers in rural America’s fields was not without conflict. “Beets” is a compelling drama directed by Berthoud’s Kathleen Gruman that reveals a little-known chapter in Northern Colorado history. It is a poignant story of bias yielding to circumstance, hatred bowing to compassion and love escaping fences.

“Beets” opens March 31 at the Rialto Theatre, 228 E. 4th Street in downtown Loveland. “Beets” was named Best Original Script in Westword magazine’s 2015 Best of Denver Awards. Performances are Friday and Saturday March 31 and April 1 at 7:30 p.m., with matinees Saturday and Sunday April 1 and 2 at 2 p.m. Tickets are available online, by phone or in person at the Rialto Box Office.

Tickets: $18 adults, $15 seniors/students and $12 for groups of 10 or more. For information or to make reservations, visit https://moontheatre.wordpress.com, or call the Rialto Box Office at 970-962-2120.

The Northern Colorado Chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia will have a display in the lobby of the Rialto for viewing by theatre patrons, and applications for membership will be available.
The Christmas meeting of the Golden Wheat Chapter of the AHSGR began with Karen Penner giving us God’s blessing. Everyone was invited to help themselves to all the wonderful snacks, sweets and punch. She shared with us a message from the Ukraine about the recent loss of religious freedoms.

Karen Calkins explained the cotton-wrapped tree that she learned about at Round-Up, along with traditions that went with it. Members shared stories about family ornaments that they brought to share.

Ella Deines read the Christmas Gospel to us in German and then in English. Ella Frederick read to us about the Christmas pickle ornament, a well-known German tradition.

After the drawings for door prizes, it was time for our entertainment, Judy Wiebe Mace on harp with angelic melodies. She tested our knowledge of old tunes.

Judy read an audience-participation story with a couple of the youth strumming the harp when they heard their cue.

Then, who should appear? Why Santa Claus, of course, with gifts for the children!

Dennis Zitterkopf read to us about the Volga tradition of Belsnickel, quite different than our modern Santa. The rest of the door prizes were given away, and the grand finale was the drawing for the prizes from the fundraiser.

It was another wonderful Christmas party to end 2016 with hopes and prayers for 2017!

Among Germans from Russia, storytelling is an important oral and written tradition that ensures the continuation and enhancement of GR history and heritage among future generations of Germans from Russia.

The annual AHSGR Storytelling Contest welcomes both adults and youth to participate in this GR tradition by submitting written stories related to Germans from Russia. They can be either fiction or non-fiction. Winning stories are presented at the Folklore Symposium at the annual convention and prize money is awarded.

Consider entering the 2017 AHSGR Storytelling Contest. Details and entry forms are available on the AHSGR website and the AHSGR Facebook page.

Just follow the instructions carefully and send all stories, completed forms, photos and other materials by e-mail attachment to ahsgr@ahsgr.org or by regular mail to AHSGR Storytelling Contest, 631 D St., Lincoln, NE 68502-1199. The deadline for entries is May 15, 2017.

Winners and honorable mentions will be announced at the convention in Milwaukee, Wis., next August.

Good luck and happy writing!