

Newsletter

Winter 2007

vol. 10, issue 5



Sunflower Chapter
of the American
Historical Society
of Germans
from Russia



"Hey, Kevin, nice tuxedo!" the crowd teases as Kevin Rupp takes the dance floor with his "bride," Glenda Schuetz. Later, Dolores Pfannenstiel pins money on the bride's dress.

Hochzeit fun at fall banquet

by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

REMEMBER HOW MUCH FUN VOLGA GERMAN WEDDINGS used to be? Chapter members who attended the annual German banquet on September 30 not only got their fill of some great German food, but also were entertained by a program recalling many of our favorite old wedding customs.

After the crowd sang the poignant *Brautslid*, Kevin Rupp and Glenda Schuetz gamely played the parts of groom and bride while narrators explained a few different customs. We saw enactments of the parental blessing given in the bride's home the morning of the wedding, the wedding march that always began an evening of merry-making, and the custom of pinning money to the newlyweds' clothing. Then fleet-footed couples demonstrated some of the traditional *Hochzeit* dances, including the polka, the waltz, the *Schottisch* and the *Katzentanz*. Wes Windholz and Joe Ebert provided the music.



This was our first gathering in the Antonino parish hall after many years of meeting in the Munjor parish hall. Although our ever-faithful cooking crew headed by Betty Pfannenstiel, Dolores Pfannenstiel, and Betty Leiker had to learn their way around a new kitchen, the large crowd of diners (numbering at least 100) enjoyed having the extra space to move around in.

Another happy winner claims her prize in the drawing that was held after everyone finished eating.

NEW LOCATION
for meetings!
Antonino Parish Hall



Next
MEETING

Dec. 9

SOCIAL...12:00
POTLUCK...12:30
PROGRAM...1:30

Our next meeting will include our annual potluck dinner, so bring a dish or two to share with all your chapter friends. Bring along an extra friend or two as well! Who knows? Maybe someone in your group will win one of our Christmas party door prizes.

Bernie Schumacher and Betty Leiker are working on another great program. Be sure

to tune up your vocal chords because carol singing will be part of the festivities.

Elmer Dreher will collect your dues if you haven't paid them yet. (Please see "Elmer Awaits" on p. 2 and the note about student memberships at the bottom of p. 8.)

To get to the parish hall in Antonino, take US-183 south from Hays for 5.6 miles, then turn west onto Antonino Road and drive another 3.9 miles. Once you get to Antonino, you'll see the church on your left.

ELLIS COUNTY NEWS June 24, 1910

A letter received from J. M. Linenberger dated Herzog, Russia, May 26, 1910, states that he and Mr. John Pfeifer arrived safely in the land of their birth. They made the trip in 18 days. He states that they were received with open arms by their relatives and friends whom they had not seen for 33 years. Mr.

Linenberger sends a description of the new church building in Herzog, Russia. He states that it is a massive structure built of brick. The dimensions are 70 x 144 ft. Height of steeple is 140 feet. It is built in gothic style, and the interior is as yet unfinished.

Presented courtesy of the
**ELLIS COUNTY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY MUSEUM,**
100 W. 7th, Hays, Kansas



Winter Hours:
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
Tuesday-Friday. Closed Saturday-Monday.
Admission: Adults, \$3. Children 3-12, \$1.

Visit us at www.elliscountyhistoricalmuseum.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is my first opportunity to communicate with our members as your president. I look forward to working with our officers and board members to continue to bring you interesting programs and entertainment.

Our other chapter board members will remain the same as in the past year except for two changes. Leonard Schoenberger of Ellis is our new vice-president, and Leona Pfeifer of Hays wishes to retire as our folklore chair. Leona has been very active in serving our chapter for many years. Thanks, Leona! We hope to have a new folklore chair by our next meeting.

Kevin Rupp did an excellent job as our president for the past six years! Kevin will continue as our genealogy chair while also representing Volga Germans on the national board of the AHSGR. Congratulations, Kevin!


We have experienced very good membership growth in the past year. We encourage all new members to attend our meetings. We need you!

Our next meeting, set for December 9, will

include a potluck dinner at the Antonino parish hall. Please bring a dish or two to share. After eating, we will have a short business meeting followed by some great entertainment. There will be a Christmas flavor to the program, which will include holiday music. Bring along any friends or neighbors who might like to become members.

We look forward to meeting you there!
--Joe Werth


International Convention of
Germans from Russia




Parkway Plaza Hotel & Convention Center
Casper, Wyoming
July 28-August 3, 2008
Make plans now to join us for this joint international convention of the GRHS and the AHSGR

Genealogy Folklore Village Visits	Research Center Superb Speakers Essay Contest Awards	Storytelling Bookstores Welcome Night	Heritage Hall Sing-a-longs Travel Programs
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American Historical Society of
Germans from Russia
631 17th Street
Lincoln, NE 68502-1199
(402) 474-3393 ahsgr@ahsgr.org



Germans from Russia Heritage Society
1125 W. Tunkapa Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58501-8115
(701) 223-6107 grhs@grhs.org



Celebrating our Common Heritage

Visit our convention web site at
www.germansfromrussia.net

ELMER AWAITS

Soon you will have your last chance to renew your AHSGR membership the easy way. Don't fool around with filling out forms and remembering to mail them to Lincoln! Just give our treasurer, Elmer Dreher, your \$55 at our next chapter meeting on December 9. He'll gladly do all the paperwork for you.

If you have received a renewal reminder from national headquarters in Lincoln, please disregard it if you have not already renewed. It was sent because we are the only AHSGR chapter that collects national dues at local meetings. It really works out best for us if done this way. Not only does local collection help us win the early renewals award given every year at the annual AHSGR convention, it also helps us keep an accurate list of who should be getting our chapter newsletter.

Remember--chapter dues remain only \$5 because of the outstanding work you keep doing for our local fund-raisers. Why, many ask, are the national dues so high at \$50? AHSGR is the only national organization we know of that spends large amounts of money every year procuring and translating new genealogical and historical records direct from Russia. These are difficult and expensive to acquire. By pooling our money through an organization containing hundreds of members, we can accomplish much more together than any of us could ever do alone. (Too bad Bill Gates isn't *Volga Deutsch--gella?!)*

**NEW LOCATION
for meetings!
Antonino Parish Hall**



OVERHEARD

Here are things that the brothers and sisters of Betty Leiker enjoy recalling at their family reunions.

Late in the 1930s, Betty's parents moved the family from Antonino, Kansas, to Sterling, Colorado, to pursue work in the beet factory. It was during that time that one of her brothers was born. Later, after Betty's family had returned to Kansas to stay, they always called the boy born in Sterling "our Colorado souvenir."

One day Betty's mom baked a bunch of meringue pies and set them aside to cool.

When she checked them later, she found that one of the boys had licked all the meringue off all the pies! Conternated, she turned to the guilty party and demanded to know, "Why did you do that?" In complete childlike innocence, he replied, "Because nobody watched me."



Proud of both his native land and his Russian-German heritage, Brent Mai wraps up his 2007 convention talk called "Data from the Russian Censuses of the Volga Colonies."

From Russia with difficulty

by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

Since the fall of Soviet communism in the 1990s, some of the most important work accomplished by *unsere Leute* has been obtaining Russian archival records and getting them translated into English. Convention speaker Brent Mai of Beaverton, Oregon, has been closely involved in this work. On June 16, he shared some of what he has learned by researching old Volga German census records.

It was Peter the Great who first adopted the practice of census-taking in the Russian Empire. The czar's chief purpose was keeping track of the activities of his citizens, especially the men. When Catherine the Great later ascended to the Russian throne, she continued this practice.

The first census to be taken after the arrival of German colonists in the Volga River area was the census of 1767. At that time more than 25,000 German immigrants lived in Russia. Now called "The Original Settlers' Lists," these records have become a rich source of information for researchers today. However, one problem is that somehow some of the original Volga German colonies were omitted from these documents, including Wittman, Zug, and Zurich. At that time over 25,000 German immigrants lived in Russia. Brent is still in the process of getting all of the 1767 lists in order and ready for publication.

In 1775 came Russia's sixth national census and the Volga Germans' second. Again some of the Volga German colonies were skipped in the count. It was not until 1798 that Russia compiled a complete census of all of the empire's Volga German colonies, which numbered 101 by then. That is not to say, however, that the 1798 records are problem-free. Close inspection has shown that they, too, contain errors, such as typos and incorrect dates. In later years other censuses were also taken. The 1834 settlers' list has been translated and is available for purchase, but Brent is still working on the 1850 census. One peculiarity of the one done in 1816 is that it lists no women.

(continued on p. 7)



This is sixth in a series of unedited reprints. The column "Liebenthal Locals" appeared in the *LaCrosse Republican* intermittently throughout the early 1900s.

THE LACROSSE REPUBLICAN
October 22, 1914

It was quite cold Saturday.

Frank Herrman and wife are parents of a baby boy.

Joseph Schoenberger left Sunday for Kansas City on a business trip.

Frank Shaffer was here from Pfeifer Sunday.

Mr. Adam Suppes, Sr. and wife spent Sunday at Pfeifer.

Anton Herrman and wife, Peter Herrman and wife and Mr. and Mrs. Jos. Herrman spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Herrman.

Peter Smith visited here Sunday from Pfeifer.

INTERNET TIPS

So what do actress Angie Dickinson, baseball pitcher Willard Schmidt, astronaut Richard Hieb, US politicians Roy Romer and Tom Daschle, Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin, and the Maid of Honor for Russia's last empress, Catherine Schneider,



all have in common? All are descendents of Germans from Russia. These are just some of the names you'll find on a list of famous and infamous Germans from Russia at www-personal.umich.edu/~steeles/gerrus/.

Fort Hays graduate and Topeka resident Duane Herrmann has had several collections of his poetry published over the years. To become acquainted with his work, go to

www.kansaspoets.com and click the link "Kansas Poets." Locate his name on the list that pops up, click it, and you will find a few of his poems. "Family Plowing" makes reference to his Volga German farming heritage.

Life Sketches of Early Agnesians

by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

Read the front page of any Sunday bulletin for St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Hays. It proclaims that the parish has been served by the Capuchin Friars since 1879. It is no secret that sisters of the Congregation of St. Agnes (CSA) has long served the parish as well--since 1880, in fact. It is also no secret that soon after the sisters' arrival in Kansas, daughters of area Volga German families began traveling to distant Wisconsin to join the Agnesians. Over time more than 160 women of Volga German extraction have become Sisters of St. Agnes, beginning with Catherine Dreiling of Herzog and ending with, most recently, Edith Crews of Hays.

This January, the Sisters of St. Agnes will begin a year-long celebration of

their 150th anniversary as a religious congregation. To join in this celebration, we will be printing a series of never-before-published excerpts from a document entitled *Life Sketches of the Deceased Sisters of the Congregation of St. Agnes, Book I, 1872-1931*. This rare archival document, carefully written in long hand, is kept at the sisters' motherhouse in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Each excerpt we print will contain a brief biography of one of the early Volga Germans who became a Sister of St. Agnes. These pioneering women of God led lives that were in most ways ordinary, although at times their stories were marked by unusual struggle and accomplishment. These sketches offer insight into times very different from our own, while also testifying to a faith that still endures among today's Catholics of Volga German heritage.

Sr. Albina Kuhn, 1874-1900

Sister M. Albina, Margaret Kuhn, was born on December 8, 1874 at Herzog, Russia. Her parents were Peter Kuhn and Gertrude Dreiling. She entered the Convent from Victoria, Kansas, on October 16, 1895. She made her first vows on August 15, 1897; her second vows on May 18, 1900.

Sister Albina was docile and obedient. During the short career of her life as a religious, she was most exemplary.

Sister was employed in caring for the sick in St. Agnes Hospital [located in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin], to which duty of love she devoted herself most faithfully until she was stricken with tuberculosis.

In the hope that her native air would prove beneficial to her, she was sent to Victoria, Kansas. But her case baffled all precautions taken, and in a short time she succumbed to the dread disease.

Her end was calm and she peacefully breathed forth her soul into the hands of her Maker at Victoria, Kansas, on November 22, 1900.

R.I.P.

BELOVED LUTHERAN HYMNS

'Ein' feste Burg'

by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

When I lived in Chelyabinsk, it was always a delight to pass by the Lutheran prayer house while services were going on inside. Russia's Lutheran Germans sang with the same gusto I had always associated with its Catholic Germans. Remembering that the Sunflower Chapter includes members of the Lutheran faith, we will begin publishing the lyrics to some of the favorite hymns once sung in the Lutheran villages along the Volga. First on tap is "Ein' feste Burg," known in English as "A Mighty Fortress."

1.
Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,
Ein' gute Wehr und Waffen.
Er hilft uns frei aus aller Not,
Die uns jetzt hat betroffen.
Der alt boese Feind
Mit Ernst er's jetzt meint;
Gross macht und viel List
Sein grausam Ruesting ist;
Auf Erd is nicht sein's Gleichen.

2.
Mit unsrer Macht ist nichts getan,
Wir sind gar bald verloren.
Es streit fuer uns der rechte Mann,
Den Gott hat selbst erkoren.
Fragst du, werder ist?
Er heisst Jesu Christ,
Der Herr Zabaoth,
Und ist kein ander Gott;
Das Feld muss er behalten.

1.
A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing,
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great,
And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

2.
Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth is His name,
From age to age the same,
And he must win the battle.

INTERNET TIPS

At www.geospectra.net/kite/lieben/lieben.htm are some aerial photos taken of Liebenthal, Kansas, in May 2006.

Go to www.kshs.org/publicat/khq/1974/74_1_saul.htm for a scholarly article by Norman Saul on the nineteenth-century migration of Germans from Russia to Kansas. It originally appeared in the *Kansas*

Historical Quarterly in the spring of 1974.

At www.volgagermans.net/volgagermans/Volga%20German%20Wedding%20Customs.htm scroll down to the bottom of the page for a reprint of an 1877 Hays City Sentinel article describing the three-day wedding of Johannes Schaefer and Rosa Dreher.

See http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/german_settlements.html for an extensive

article on residents of Saskatchewan who have German roots. Quite a few trace their ancestry back to the Volga, the Black Sea, and Bukovina.

Go to www.librarysquirrelz.blogspot.com/2004_07_01_archive.html and scroll down to the blog entry entitled, "Tales from Small-Town Saskatchewan: Liebenthal." You'll almost swear you're reading about our own Liebenthal in Rush County!

What to expect from DNA tests

by Frank Jacobs, Northeast Kansas Chapter

So you think you might want to test your DNA? First, I do not want to overpromise what DNA can do. It probably won't give you the name and address of a particular individual ancestor. What it can do over time is locate individuals who match your DNA on 12, 25, 37 or even 63 percise points of biological identity, enough to tell you that you and some other person had a common ancestor. If you are lucky, you can contact this person, share histories, and extend family records back in time. If you are very lucky, as I was, that other person may be part of an extensive historical family study group, someone who has already researched the family at a particular time and place. Or that person might be a member of a particular family chart already in your possession.

The easiest and quickest way to test genealogical DNA is through a male in a family line, because of the way the DNA is passed on. A male carries the DNA that can be traced back to the original male in the clan. This means that through a few shared tests, a family can trace the history of all the males of a surname found in a particular family chart. It also means that the cost of lab tests can be shared among many family members.

Maternal lines are pursued by locating and testing a brother, father, uncle, or male cousin of the mother. Your DNA data base is a "living thing," which means that new data can be added to it by unknown new persons over the next 20 years.

Each month I get a couple of contacts from persons connected to a shared ancestor from 400 or 500 years ago. However, there is the possibility that some distant relatives may live in a war zone or a poor area with no internet access. From these areas you can expect very few or no contacts over the next few years. With DNA data bases there are no guarantees. However, because most Volga Germans originate from areas of western and southern Germany, you can probably expect to uncover quite a few European and American contacts.

Although many testing labs are available, I use and recommend Family Tree DNA because they preserve your specimens for 20 years, allowing for future refinements in DNA research as these develop. Here is what you do. Go to www.FamilyTreeDNA.com and use their e-mail address to tell them that you would like to test your Y DNA. You have a choice. You could choose to test only the first 12 markers, which is not very useful, but it would tell you if there are others out there whose Y DNA matches yours at this time. That will cost you about \$125 and help you decide whether you want to test for further contacts at this time. All you will learn from 12 markers is what major

population haplogroup you descended from. Twelve markers are so distant in time they are not useful for making specific identifications in the present day. However, if you do what is generally recommended and test your saliva for one of the more detailed tests, the 25-marker and the 37-marker, the entire test costs about \$260 by credit card. These tests usually are done several weeks after each other, and the whole process might take a couple of months. I suggest sharing the cost with other family members. When you order the test, which is a simple saliva swab sent in a mailing tube, you sign a legal form allowing people whose DNA matches yours to contact you and share family histories. You in turn are given a list of persons and e-mail addresses, plus a determination of the strength of the match with each one and the time since the two of you shared a common ancestor.

BACK IN STOCK

The chapter's first shipment of Larry Weigel's new CD "Opa's One-Man German Band" sold out quickly, especially after June convention-goers heard his live presentation of songs, stories, and jokes. Have no fear; the second shipment is here! Call Kevin Rupp (785-625-7356 or 785-625-6638) to order yours. Priced at \$17, this CD is a great way to introduce kids and adults alike to our Volga German heritage.



Winter 2007

Grandpa's long walk, pt. 1

by Edgar B. Dreher

When John Philip Dreher, Jr. left Russia in 1876, he was only nine years old. But this strong young boy lived long enough to share the experience of his exhausting trip out of Russia with his grandson, Edgar B. Dreher. Presently 86 years old and residing in Longmont, Colorado, Edgar shared the following write-up with his cousin, Elmer Dreher of Hays.

At different times when we went to the house of Grandpa and Grandma Dreher, my brother Alfred and I listened to Grandpa tell about leaving Russia when he was little. This story was told over a period of time--as he felt like talking about it. At the end of each visit, he would look down at the floor in silence with tears in his eyes, as if reliving the account, and Grandma would thank Alfred and me for coming to visit with him. In due time, he told us everything that had happened on his way out of Russia, from the very beginning.

It was a sad time when the family started the process of going through their possessions, making decisions of which items they could keep and which items they had to leave behind. There were a lot of tears that fell because of the realization that they were leaving behind what they had worked so hard to obtain. He said, "They packed so much and yet so little. I had to sew squares of burlap sack together, small and big." When I asked him why, he replied that he would come to that later. He continued, "My mother sewed long suspenders on my overalls, and she sewed buttons on the side of the bib." When again I asked why, again he answered, "I will tell you later."

The families from the North, he said, had started out first. He heard tales of their travels while they were resting at the place where the two groups met up. This first group had already walked 500 miles or better. He did not know how long they had walked, but there were many, many people in their group. They had come down to the Great Karaman River, where they met with the people of Grandpa's group, who were from Neu Obermunjour. The two groups sat and visited together for three days before moving on. The people from the North said they had sick people, and some had died and been buried along the way.

During their three-day rest was when everyone had a big bath and washed all their clothes. My grandpa said nobody felt any shame about bathing out in the open with everyone. While traveling together, the people also played the rosary every day, and they sang many times a day. He remembered that they usually cried as they prayed and sang.

At this point in his story, Grandpa got back to those squares made from burlap sacks. In the clay dirt at each campsite along the way, they dug square holes, then placed in the holes the squares of cloth with strings hanging loose from them, which served as wicks. Then they poured hot beeswax into the holes. These underground "candles" provided fire for cooking and frying.

"Now let me come to my bib overalls," Grandpa said. "My build was tall with a lot of muscle." The extra-long straps and the buttons on the bib made it possible

for his mother to put a little baby in-between the bib and him. "I put my hands on the baby and held it close as I walked. I liked that the little ones would smile and giggle." When his mother took a little one from him to be fed, she would then place a child a little older in his bib, and its legs would hang out the back. "What fun," Grandpa said, "but I got tired."

After awhile they got to the big city of Samara. "The people would not let us come near the city. They hated us so we stayed by the Volga River. We were low on food by then--everyone was--but there was a big pack of wolves the men shot, and the people ate wolf meat." The meat was hard to chew, so his mother cut it up into small pieces and boiled it. They stayed two days at the big river and also ate the meat of squirrels and any other little animals they could find. Besides meat, they ate weeds and the seeds of weeds.

"We were still eating the hard brown bread we had brought with us, too. But it was so hard it would break a hammer!" Grandpa said. They also snacked on hard candy and a lot of peanut brittle they had brought along for keeping up their strength.

From Samara the travelers headed toward Saratov. When the group moved, they sent scouts ahead to clear a path for the people to walk through. "I don't know how many days it was 'til we got to Saratov," Grandpa said, but after they got there, people from the south of Pfeifer and other towns joined up with them. They stayed in Saratov, on the right side of the city, for two days before moving on.

"We headed west and had to stay on the right side of the little cities. A lot of people from these little cities joined us, but the people in them hated us."

Then began the worst part of their long walk, difficult because they no longer traveled near any rivers.

(to be continued)

Fall Meeting Photo Highlights



Leonard Schoenberger, Shirley Brungardt, and Joe Werth are sworn in as Vice-President, Historian, and President by Leona Pfeifer.



One of the new president's first duties is to dance the *Schottisch* with his wife Agnes during an explanation of German wedding customs.



Once again, the music of Joe Ebert on the dulcimer and Wes Windholz on the accordion delights chapter members.

From Russia with difficulty

(continued from p. 3)

Other records available from Russia are those called "Family Lists." These were collected mostly by churches and appeared at random times in history.

Now here are Brent's answers to questions posed by audience members.

Q. How much did Volga Germans travel about within Russia?

A. After 1798 there was some movement down to the Caucasus, but from the very beginning there was always a great deal of movement among the various villages of the Volga.

Q. Will the AHSGR publish any of the Family Lists?

A. They are still working on getting complete records out of Russia. Some information Russia simply will not release, plus there is always a dire need for translators. Archives exist in many locations in Russia--Saratov, Samara, Engels, and others--but their materials can be very hard to get, and always there are prices to negotiate. The Engels archive is a new facility. The Volgograd archive is closed for renovation. The Samara archive, though, is eager, ready, and willing to work with us.

Q. Are any other records available on Volga Germans besides family lists, censuses, and family trees?

A. Not so much. The Black Sea Germans have more data than other groups have. A big problem is that there are no indexes for Russian archival documents. You can't just trace a surname using an index. Instead, you might have to look through twenty different books before you find one with a particular surname you are looking for.

Q. What kinds of church records are available?

A. That varies widely among denominations. Most Catholic churches kept birth, death, and marriage records. The diocese of Tyrospol collected these annually and compiled them into large books. About 255 of these books exist today in Saratov, but they are not in any way organized or alphabetized. They are simply assembled in the order in which parishes sent in the requested records.

NEWS & MEDIA TIDBITS

Russia just cannot seem to get away from strong autocratic forms of government. Most observers now agree that Putin will continue to rule Russia despite the country's two-term limit for presidents. His plan, in a nutshell, is to strengthen the power of the prime minister, then *become* the prime minister after handing off the presidency to someone else in Russia's upcoming elections. "Of

course, there remains the tiny matter of the Russian Constitution, which places most power in the presidency, not the premiership," writes Russian journalist Mikhail Rostovsky. "But we can safely assume that Russians will tacitly agree to ignore such unpleasant facts." (For more info, see p. 14 of the Oct. 12 issue of *The Week*.)

There was great rejoicing in Russia when

the city of Sochi on the Black Sea was selected for the 2014 Olympics. Now the country is working on making Sochi a world-class tourist destination, according to another item in the Oct. 12 issue of *The Week*. You can keep up with Sochi's Olympic preparations at www.Sochi2014.com.



Happenings at Headquarters

by Kevin Rupp

I just attended my first board meeting in Lincoln and thoroughly enjoyed my time being with the other members and seeing the staff once again.

Thanks to our chapter and *all* the Kansas chapters, AHSGR reported a profit of about \$64,000 from the convention. This will help immensely with the general operation of AHSGR headquarters. It has been some time since the convention has seen a profit like this. And so their next question was, "Are you ready to host another convention?" Lucky for us, the conventions are now planned until about 2012!

Be sure to make plans now to attend the joint AHSGR-GRHS convention July 28-August 3, 2008 at the Parkway Plaza Hotel & Convention Center in Casper, Wyoming. Call 1-800-270-7829 to make your hotel reservations. Rates are \$75 a night, but be sure to tell them you are with the convention. This should be a fun and interesting event because of the two societies joined together in hosting it. Many workshops, speakers, programs, and tours will be provided. For more information, go to www.germansfromrussia.net or contact headquarters at 402-474-3363 in Lincoln. I hope we will have a few from our chapter going to this event. If you want to wait and go to the 2009 convention, though, you had better get your passport in order because it will be located in Medicine Hat, Canada!

I will serve on four different committees connected with the board: Archives, Historical Research, Editorial, and Convention Planning. In the area of historical research, we are working on getting a book by Dr. Igor Plevé translated. This book includes those people who settled in various colonies and tells of their various movements and activities. It will be a very important book for

researchers. I presented a \$1500 check on behalf of our chapter, which we approved at our last meeting, towards translating and preparing this book for publication.

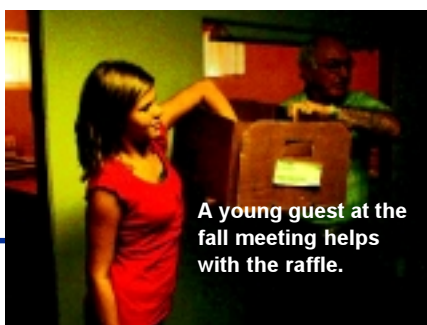
We are also working on some documents that are basically called "Exit Documents." The title of the published book will be "Leaving Russia Forever" So far there are about 204 families listed for the first book in this series. The hope is to continue making more of them available. Families from the colonies of Kamenka, Rothammel, Leichtling, Semenovka, Pfeifer, and Husaren are represented, just to name a few.

A new tier of national membership may be offered within the year. For an extra fee, you will be able to access SOAR documents on an unlimited basis. This membership tier will be ideal for those who want to set aside a year to concentrate on researching their family trees. Look for more details on this in 2008!

There is so much more I could say. Please know that the staff in Lincoln is working very hard in the limited number of hours they are given to do their work.

A real bargain for the students in your family

Cynthia Miller of the North Star Chapter recently wrote in her chapter's newsletter that a national AHSGR membership is a great Christmas gift for a younger family member. "My grandmother started doing this for me when I was in college, even though it was years before I really took interest and participated in organization activities. You may not see immediate results, but it's a gift that can have long-reaching implications."



A young guest at the fall meeting helps with the raffle.

Did you know that a year's membership to the AHSGR costs only \$8 for students aged 14 and under and \$15 for students aged 15 to 24? Ask Sunflower Chapter Treasurer Elmer Dreher to enroll a young family member when he collects annual dues at our final meeting of 2007. You never know where your gift might lead a young person you love!

NEWS & MEDIA TIDBITS

In September, Greenpeace Russia observed the 50th anniversary of an explosion at a nuclear weapons plant that exposed 272,000 people to significant, cancer-causing levels of radiation. Greenpeace called the 1957 tragedy in Chelyabinsk oblast the world's second-worst nuclear accident in history.

Did you know that people attending the 2007

AHSGR convention came from as far away as Russia, Norway, Germany, France, Argentina, and 22 or 23 different states? That was among the facts reported by KBSH-TV reporter Adam Everett Marshall in a convention report he filed on June 11 for channel 7 in Hays.

At the website of TIME magazine you can find a photo essay called "Portraits of Russia." The 29 photos attempt to show how

the country has changed since the fall of communism 15 years ago. Go to www.time.com:80/time/photoessays/2006/portraits_of_russia/.

If you watch "American Idol," this will interest you. Cynthia Miller of the North Star Chapter notes that recent winner Jordin Sparks, 17, is a great-grandchild of Leah and Otto Wiedmann, who were German-Russian farmers in North Dakota.

A history of Brazil's Volga Germans, pt. 1

The following is extracted from the book *Resumo Histórico e Genealogia dos Alemães do Volga* ("Historical Summary and Genealogy of the Volga Germans") by Carlos Alberto Schwab. It was edited in 1997 on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of the immigration of the Volga Germans to Brazil. Kevin Rupp procured this manuscript for us.

In Russia the gathered people chose five persons to travel to the United States with the purpose of investigating Nebraska as a possible colonization area. Those chosen were Baltasar Brungardt (of Herzog), Peter Leiker (of Ober-Monjour), Jakob Ritter (of Luzern), Peter Stöcklein (of Zug), and Anton Wasinger (of Schönchen). Brungardt resigned and Nikolaus Schamne (of Graf) was chosen in his place. These five men later would be known, among those who immigrated, as the explorers. They visited the United States during the summer of 1874.

It happened that in the same period D. Pedro II (1825-1891), Emperor from Brazil, while on a visit to Europe found out about the events in the colonies of the Germans in Russia. D. Pedro II reportedly said of them, "I have a lot of interest and enough lands to shelter this whole people." He then sent agents to Russia, inviting some elements to come to visit the vast lands of Brazil.

The Germans in Russia decided to choose six explorers (three Catholics and three Protestants) to travel to Brazil. Their names were Jakob Müller (of Dönnhoff), Gottfried--or Joseph--

Mayer (of Graf), Karl Hartmann (of Reinwald), Nikolaus Schamne (of Graf--the same one who had been part of the delegation that visited the United States in 1874), Marcheim (of Merkel) and Johannes Schmidt (of Kamenka). Added to their number was Alexander Reuss as a clerk (writer).

The Brazilian general consul in Hamburg was especially kind with the explorers. Certainly due to his influence, Mr. August Bolten, founder and owner of the Company Hamburgo-America (HAPAG), granted a free round trip for them. The explorers traveled as guests of HAPAG.

These men already declared upon arrival that they would cultivate wheat, a predominant activity in the colonies of the Volga. This interested the Brazilian government a lot because the cultivation of cereals was very rare in the country, and wheat planting was unknown in Brazil.

It is thought that the explorers stayed in Brazil from September of 1876 to January of 1877, with their expenses paid by the Brazilian imperial government through the general consul in Hamburg. The explorers

were received and assisted by the government of D. Pedro II as official visitors and were accompanied by people from the Ministry of Agriculture on visits to the southern area of the country, considered to be the most favorable lands for wheat growing.

In the most helpful way, the explorers were granted travel and made comfortable, and they were granted their choice of good land for the planting of cereals. The government's agricultural employees accompanied them everywhere they went. The employees demonstrated to the settlers a great kindness, which pleased them extraordinarily, because they were accustomed in Russia to another sort of treatment by the government. The employees firmly advised them to cultivate wheat in the forest lands, which were known to be fertile. However, forests were strange to these natives of the Volga. They liked steppes, and they rejected the government employees' advice. In this way they committed the mistake of thinking that the fields of the plateau of the State of Paraná were as good as the land of the Russian steppes.

(to be continued)

PHOTO FEATURE

This photo shows two brothers whose lives began in the Volga village Gattung (Zug) but ended on opposite ends of the earth. George Luia, left, died in Ellis, Kansas, on February 16, 1965, but Michael Luia, right, died in Karaganda, Kazakstan, sometime in 1971. (The man in the middle was their commanding officer, of unknown name.) George worked as a cobbler during his three years in the army, and both brothers served in 1904 during Czar Nicholas II's ill-fated war with Japan.

Historians believe that disenchantment with the Russo-Japanese War prefigured, and in some ways contributed to, the wider discontentment that followed the Russian Empire's involvement in World War I. Vladimir Lenin rose to power partially on the strength of his promise to pull the country out of that wildly unpopular war.

This picture comes to us from Nick Luea of Flint, Michigan, via Leona Pfeifer of Hays.



SUNFLOWER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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Inside *this newsletter*

- 1...Fall Meeting Notes...Next Meeting
- 2...Ellis County News, 1910...President's Message...Elmer Awaits...2008 in Casper
- 3...Overheard...Brent Mai's Convention Talk...Liebenthal Locals, 1914
- 4...Internet Tips...Sr. Albina Kuhn, CSA... *Ein' feste Burg*
- 5...Internet Tips...Why and How to Test Your DNA...Weigel CD Back in Stock
- 6...Grandpa's Long Walk, Pt. 1
- 7...Kansas' Eight Wonders...Fall Meeting Photos
- 8...News & Media Tidbits...Happenings at Headquarters...Bargain for Students
- 9...News & Media Tidbits...Brazil's Volga Germans