

Newsletter

Summer 2008

vol. 11, issue 3



Sunflower Chapter
of the American
Historical Society
of Germans
from Russia

Music takes chapter down Memory Lane

by Judy Hoffman

"HANSA, HANSA, RUH', RUH'! WO BIST DANN DU?" So begins a German children's song that says, "Johnny, Johnny, quiet, quiet! Where are you? What are you doing? Sitting in the barn and sewing up my shoe. Fixing my shoe, front to back."



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

A special guest, Waldemar Kiesner, will give the program. He descends from the Kisners of Pfeifer, Russia, and grew up in Siberia before his family moved to Germany in 1993.

The meal will feature fried chicken and all that goes with it. The chapter will pay for the dinner, but members are asked to bring a dessert from home to share. Please call Dolores Pfannenstiel by Aug. 13 with your meal reservation. Her number is 625-5346.

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.

This was one of several songs that Leona (Wasinger) Pfeifer described in her presentation at the April chapter meeting. The singer who brought the songs to life was her sister-in-law, Norma Ruder. "We pride ourselves on preserving our heritage, the history of our people," Leona said. "We know why our ancestors left Germany, lived in Russia, left Russia, or remained under Stalin. Yes, our history is done well." We know about the foods and how they were prepared and preserved--and sometimes flavored with Russian twists. Proverbs, songs, and music have been preserved. Many can still sing and play church songs, wedding songs, and fun songs like "Schoene Gute Nacht" and "Der Alter Baltenhauser," but what has been lost almost totally are lullabies and children's songs.

Leona obtained the words and music to several old favorites and gave them to Norma, who practiced them and purchased a few items to demonstrate their meaning. Leona pointed out, "You don't know how much time, effort, and even money Norma spent to present this program today."

The first song, "Hup, Hup, Hup," was about a small horse. It says, roughly, "Little pony is galloping over sticks and stones. Don't break your legs! Clap, clap, clap. Tip, tip, tap. Don't throw me off; control your ways. Little pony, do it for love of me. Don't throw me off! Bang, bang goes the whip, and what a snappy sound it makes...."

Another song Leona mentioned was the lullaby, "Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf." She could find only the words, the music apparently long forgotten. The lullaby says, "Sleep, my child, sleep. Your father's at work. Father is awake and protecting you. Mother is sitting in the little room, patching the little shirts. Sleep, child, sleep."

When Leona asked if anyone else could remember any children's songs, Wilma Braun mentioned one that goes, "Uncle Michael, Uncle Michael, where are the geese? Sitting in the water and wagging their tails." Leroy Herrman commented that at weddings, in the afternoons, people used to gather around to sing a wide range of favorite songs, and some were children's songs. All the old songs were preserved best in the families that loved to sing together.

Pt. 1

My first trip to the Volga

by Norma (Reichert) Pipkin

ED. NOTE: Ten years ago, while I was living in Chelyabinsk, Norma came to Russia for a visit. We met in Moscow and journeyed together to the Volga, the land of our ancestors. Here are Norma's notes from that momentous trip, starting with what she wrote on Thursday, June 11, 1998.

From Moscow to Marx (Katerinenstadt)

We awoke on the train at 10:30 a.m. When we awoke, Irina [our Russian guide] was already up and immediately she brought us three glasses of hot water. The trains are equipped with these large samovars of hot water. We had brought along instant coffee, cheese, apples, crackers, and salted red fish. We then visited until our train arrived at 3:40 p.m. in Saratov. This is at least 459 miles southeast of Moscow, and the trip took sixteen hours. Irina claimed her usual train took fourteen hours. This train stopped many times during the night and did not travel that fast.

We were met at the train station by Igor, brother of Irina. He lives in Engels, right across the river. We drove to the dock and took several pictures. We were fascinated by the bridge and the Volga, which is approximately two miles wide at this point in its course down to the Caspian Sea.



Norma stands with Sister Alice Ann at the bridge crossing the Volga River from Saratov to Engels. Saratov has a population of 581,000. At Saratov the Volga is frozen for 162 days in the year. Rainfall, which is between eight and sixteen inches annually, comes mainly in the spring and early summer. This is the administrative city where the first German immigrants arrived in 1764. From here they were led out to their settlement sites on the inhospitable Volga steppes.

Igor picked us up in his new white Lada. He had been a professor at the University of Saratov. However, because the government rarely pays its employees, he decided to go into private business. We stopped at his apartment (very run down) in Engels. His daughter, Anna, fixed us tea, cheese, cake, jam, bread, and sausage. We then drove to Marx (Katerinenstadt) in about thirty minutes.

I would guess that Marx is about 25 miles from Engels. We arrived at 6 p.m. and used an outdoor shower at the Titovs' house. The shower was a wooden structure with a tank at the top. They fill the tank in the morning and by evening the water is warm enough for a comfortable shower. We then sat down to a supper of cold soup with dill, cucumber, potato, and hardboiled eggs. We also had cheese, sausage, toast, Clara's canned tomatoes, and for dessert a whipped cream torte. We went walking after supper to the dock and back, and we were in bed by 10:30 p.m., exhausted as usual. The day had been very hot, over 100F, with no wind, and Irina said there had not been any rain for the past month.

First full day in Marx

Sister Alice and I slept in, and when we awoke, everyone in the house was gone. Presumably they went to the family dacha, a summer home in the country which is really an extensive fruit and vegetable garden.

Sister Alice and I made our way to the center of the city, which was a five-minute walk from the house. Today was a holiday, Independence Day, which commemorates the first free democratic election in Russia, the one that first elected Boris Yeltsin as President. The city square, dominated by a statue of Lenin and also the Lutheran church, was filled with vendors. A stage was set up for several different musical performers.

After half an hour, we turned around and Nikolai, our host, was right behind us. He urged us to go home and get breakfast, then see the historical museum in Marx, which he has directed since 1992.

(to be continued)

Summer 2008





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

The careful reader of these entries will note three different spellings of the same family name: Herrmann, Herman, and Hermann. Descendents of town founders Jacob Herrmann Sr. and Lorenzo Herrmann by this time had agreed on alternate spellings of their surname to

aid the town postmaster, who had difficulty getting mail addressed to a Herrmann into the right family's mailbox. His job was easier once he knew that John Herrmann was different from John Herman and John Hermann!

THE LACROSSE REPUBLICAN
May 13, 1915

Mr. John Legleiter and family are visiting their parents here.

Clyde Burlingame and Wesley Butler spent part of Sunday at Seeley's, west of Liebenthal.

W.H. Irish of Illinois Township was over on business Monday.

Joseph Younger went to Munger the first of the week.

Anton J. Hermann and Carl Legleiter were at Loretta Sunday afternoon.

R.C. Jeffries is building an addition to his residence.

Jacob Diehl autoed over to John Schlitter's Tuesday of last week to be at the bedside of his sick sister.

Peter Hepp and wife are making their home on the Martin Herman farm, west of town.

Anton Herrmann is enlarging his house.

Frank Herrmann is erecting a cook house, 10 x 14.

[unreadable line] a salary of \$50 per month.

Peter Legleiter was in Salina the first of the week.

C.B. Funk and wife and Timothy Shorts and wife were in town Sunday.

house; well, he went right past our place without stopping. We were not even allowed to take a day of rest.

Hearty greeting from your loving L.R.

Now Mama will write too!

New materials on Germans in Soviet gulag available

Late in 2007, Ruth Derksen Siemens of Canada launched a new website, www.gulagletters.com. It features a new collection of letters written to Canadians by their German Russian relatives who were held in the Soviet gulag during the 1930s. The website offers the opportunity to buy a book including all 463 letters, *Remember Us*, and a DVD, *Through the Red Gate*. Here is one of the letters from the collection, dated January 24, 1932:

Dear Aunt Liese and Uncle Franz and Children,

Since it is Sunday today, I will try to write and answer your very precious letter. When I came home from work yesterday Lena came to meet me and she was so happy, "You have a letter from America, from Aunt Liese!" Yes, Aunt Liese, I felt proud and privileged over the others to personally receive a letter from you. I value it very highly and am so delighted. It was not meant to be as grim as you seem to interpret it. I regret that I hurt your feelings and will never do it again.

Now I wish all of you the very best of health, which we also enjoy to this very day. Recently Jascha was rather sickly. But we gave him extra "Speck" [pork fat] from our meager rations; -- now he is quite cheerful. We are so very thankful for that package from you. We exist on a very slim diet. It is so sad that my dear brother's portion has been lost. Peter, that poor fellow, has now been imprisoned for 7 months and daily gets only his little piece of bread for which he must work very hard. He is often very close to despair. He cannot understand why he must suffer so

in his best years. He and P.D. and J.F. and H.W. have tried to flee from here -- but were caught every time! Elder H. Voth from Melkg. was here last week Sunday, and he told us the last time they were caught they were sent to jail for 3 days without even 1 piece of bread. Then Voth put in a good word for them. They were freed then but driven and chased back to their forced labour.

I have very dangerous and hazardous work as well. I must chop down trees in the forest. It is often very cold and an average of 1 meter deep snow so that you often sink into the snow up to your hips. We are about 20 klm. [kilometers] away from Aynebka in a barracks filled with nothing but Russian prisoners -- and we are 9 children of Mennonites. We do not have many joyful experiences here in the Urals. We hope things will change again. Not so long ago a young girl was killed by a falling tree and crushed into the snow so far that only the corner of her dress was visible. And so we are full of fear from one day to the next. I am tempted to use the weapons of the rabbits [run away] but who knows if that will happen. Here you cannot live on what you earn! You wrote that Santa Claus was very poor at your

Why they left home, pt. 3

by Helen Jira

ED. NOTE: In part two, we learned of the Volga Germans' first winter in Russia. Deposited in an area east of Saratov along the Karamann River, they dug themselves caves in which to live until government housing contractors were scheduled to arrive in the spring. Part 3 forms the final installment in this series of articles explaining how and why so many Germans twice participated in mass emigrations from their homelands--first in the 1760s and again in the 1870s.



The contractors brought government homes in the second year. They were just simple, temporary frame structures. No longer did they have to protect themselves from wild animals. Just as everything seemed to move forward, the Volga staged a major flood in 1768. The summers were extremely warm with dust storms and the winters were cold with the north wind blowing most of the time. Because the colonists were near starvation, they were forced to apply for government food.

There was still another danger. Criminals were exiled to the Volga area, which at that time was the Siberia of Russia. Bandits roamed the countryside. Still an even greater danger were the Kirghiz. These uncivilized people consisted of many tribes. They resented the colonists and waged war, burning the villages, stealing everything in sight, and taking the women and the children to be sold as slaves. Four colonies were completely demolished. The final Kirghiz raid took place at Marienthal in 1774. Following the raid, the government took action and established a fort at Orenberg. This was three hundred and fifty miles east of the Ural River near the Kirghiz mountain passes.

Despite their failures, the first two generations strived night and day for that promised Catherinan paradise. Some forty years passed before all the temporary homes were replaced with lumber and brick.

Population increases reduced individual holdings. Between 1845 and 1860 three new colonies were formed: Liebenthal, Neu-Obermonjour in 1859 and Marienburg in 1860. By 1875 an individual's share of land was reduced to three and one-half acres.

In the nineteenth century the German industry achieved significant progress as the Volga region developed into a major agricultural empire. The Russian peasants resented the freedoms enjoyed by the Volga Germans.

On November 16, 1870, Alexander II announced that it was the duty of every citizen to serve in the military. This was in direct contrast to Catherine's Manifesto. Finally, after several versions, a detailed law was passed on January 13, 1874 by the Russian government for military conscription. This law created

A room in the historical museum of Marx, Russia, shows a typical bed and cradle that would have been found in a Volga German home of the 1800s. Although small by modern American standards, the bed was considered a double bed in its day. Also on display are the Sunday dress-up clothes of a typical Volga German couple.

much concern for the German colonists and renewed the desire to emigrate from Russia to avoid military service.

One of the principals of this genealogy [Schaeffer Genealogy, 1994] is Balthazar Brungardt, a relative on my mother's side. He was well educated and with his knowledge was able to obtain an emigration permit. Realizing there was a time limit on emigration, he and others arranged meetings to develop plans to leave Russia. This started the exodus of Germans to America.

Many families made plans to leave by getting a passport from the circuit judge, paying their debts, and getting a release from the authorities of the town.

NEWS & MEDIA TIDBITS

Two Ellis County churches built by our Volga German ancestors recently have nabbed new honors. Following its selection in a statewide vote as one of the eight wonders of Kansas, St. Fidelis in Victoria also was named one of the eight wonders of Ellis County, along with Holy Cross Church in Pfeifer. Local residents filling out paper ballots and online voters made the selections.

St. Fidelis was dedicated August 27, 1911 and seats 1,100. Holy Cross was finished in May 1918. Both churches are open daily for visitors.

The other Ellis County sites selected for the eight wonders list were Historic Fort Hays, Sternberg Museum of Natural History, the Chestnut Street District, the Ellis County Historical Society Museum, Frontier Park, and Fort Hays State University.

Don't forget our September 14 fund-raiser, the VFW Stars and Stripes Breakfast! Two ways to help:

1. Buy tickets in advance.
2. Sell tickets in advance.

Pick up tickets from Kevin at St. Joe's or at the August 17 picnic.

Life Sketches of Early Agnesians

by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

The fourth Kansas native to die in the Congregation of St. Agnes was also the 115th to die in the congregation overall. In this obituary letter sent to all members of CSA in the summer of 1918, one can note a flowery style of prose not used in earlier years. Undoubtedly the many pious phrases reflect what was happening in the Church at large, when Rome was denouncing what it called "Modernism" and was developing a kind of bunker mentality against the fallout from new scientific theories and social movements. A retreat into medieval forms of spirituality (e.g., thinking of the world as evil) accompanied that reaction.

In this series of life sketches, we can see something of a pattern emerging. Sisters born in Kansas often were allowed to come back to Kansas as homemakers, teachers, and hospital workers. This is noteworthy because from 1870 onward Sisters of St. Agnes lived and worked in many different states, from New York in the East to Kansas in the West and from Wisconsin in the North to Texas in the South. Furthermore, there were never enough personnel to accommodate all the requests for sisters that kept pouring into the motherhouse. Yet CSA's superiors seemed to recognize the potential of keeping its presence in Kansas strong.



Sr. Ventura Berens, 1879-1918

Sister M. Ventura, Elizabeth Berens, was born at Victoria, Kansas, on July 3, 1879. Her parents were Herman Berens and Margaret Munk. She entered the Convent on August 23, 1901; made first temporary vows on August 15, 1904; second vows on August 15, 1907; perpetual vows on August 15, 1914. Sister died on August 21, 1918 at Hays, Kansas.

Elizabeth was ever a model and obedient child both at home as well as at school. Her piety was deep and sincere. The fleeting pleasures of the world had no attractions for her, and following the call to the religious life, she sought admission to our Congregation, at the age of twenty-two.

She was received, and after having made profession, was employed in teaching the primary grades in our parochial schools. She spent many years at St. Peters, Wisconsin. Later she taught at Hays and Victoria, Kansas. Sister was a model religious teacher, who, not only imparted the required knowledge, but instilled also solid religious principles into the minds of the little ones entrusted to her.

Our good Sister was for several years a patient sufferer from stomach trouble; nevertheless, she quietly attended to her duties most cheerfully, until obliged by failing health to retire. In August 1918 she was taken to St. Anthony's Hospital at Hays, where she underwent an operation for ulcers of the stomach. Two days later a hemorrhage ensued, and a post-operation performed which proved fatal. As her life was beautiful, so was the end. She prepared well and accepted death from the hands of God, with cheerful resignation on August 21, 1918. Sister was buried in St. Fidelis Cemetery at Victoria, Kansas. R.I.P.

The trend of Kansas natives serving in their home state continues today. Although no Kansan has made vows in CSA in 25 years, thirteen sisters presently serve here. Of those thirteen, only one is not herself a native Kansan. It therefore seems safe to say that CSA long ago would have retrenched from this part of the country if not for the many members it drew from Kansas from the 1870s through the 1970s.

Coincidentally, the last Kansas woman to enter CSA just celebrated her silver jubilee this summer in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Although now a resident of

Illinois, Sister Edie Crews grew up in Hays and belongs to our chapter of the AHSGR. Her mother was a Suppes from Liebenthal.

Also celebrating jubilees in CSA this year are these Kansas natives: Sister Audrey Pfannenstiel, 75 years; Sisters Ann Walters and Mary Martha Karlin, 60 years; Sister Mary Rose Meis, 50 years; and Sister Mary Riedel, 40 years. Congratulations to one and all!



Pt. 1

Jacob Brull, Kansas pioneer

by Francis King

ED. NOTE: At our last chapter meeting, Carol Brull asked if this 1942 college assignment would be good for the newsletter. She laughed, however, as she pointed out that the young Fort Hays student earned only a "B" for his work. The professor explained the grade by writing, "A good biographical sketch; there are differences between this and a research paper." We think you'll agree that, as biographical sketches go, this one is as good as they get.

JACOB BRULL WAS BORN IN THE SMALL TOWN OF Munjor, Russia, during the month of February in the year 1869. Munjor was a town of about six thousand. Most of the inhabitants were farmers who had small tracts of land close to town. This land was owned by the government, and each year the farmers drew numbers to see what tract of land they would get. Very seldom did a farmer get the same tract of land twice.

Jacob lived there with his parents for five years, until Germans of military age were forced either to leave or to be called into military service [...] if they still remained in Russia. So Jacob's father decided to go to South America, where they could be free.

They left Munjor, Russia, in November of 1876. Traveling was hard, because they had only wagons drawn by oxen. The first day, they reached Katerinenstadt, a town on the banks of the Volga River. They had to cross the river, but there were no bridges. Conveniently enough, the nights got very cold there, and by ten-thirty that night the river had frozen hard enough for wagons to cross if they were not loaded too heavily. All of the wagons got across except one, but it was saved.

The next stop was Saratov, and there they boarded a train. It was the first train Jacob had ever seen, and he really got a thrill out of it. They waited about a day and a half for the train, and after it did come, they had to ride in cattle cars. At that time they were



Today, the ancestral home of the Brull family is a sad, old town with more cattle than people. Only a few impoverished families live in present-day Munjor, Russia. None claim German ancestry, and they dwell in ramshackle houses set among piles of scrap metal, bricks, and used lumber. This photo was taken by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA during a visit to the Volga in June 1998. The cattle are being driven down the town's main street as evening settles in.

glad even to get a ride in cattle cars. The first stop the train made was [at] the border between Germany and Russia. There they had to get off to have their passports examined and also to allow soldiers to board the train. Two trainloads of soldiers passed there before the next train came to pick them up. They waited almost two days for this train. The reason for so many soldiers being moved was that Russia was at war with Turkey.

They boarded a German train, which took them to Hamburg, and there they were to embark for South America. But Lady Luck was against them because Jacob and his brother contracted measles. They were quarantined for a month and a half, and for this reason they missed their first boat. Then they had to wait two more weeks after quarantine for the next boat. During the two weeks after

quarantine, Jacob got around Hamburg and saw all he could of the German town. He saw the small German bands playing in the streets, happy people singing and dancing, with everything that would make a community content.

Finally the day came for them to depart from Europe. That was in the fall of 1877. They boarded a small steamboat that was to be their transportation to South America. It was a good boat although it was small. It carried about three hundred emigrants as its passengers, but as cargo it carried cattle and horses. There was enough space to take care of everyone, but they didn't have private rooms or staterooms. They were just huddled together in different parts of the ship, with no privacy whatever.

(to be continued)

'Ehr' sei dem Vater und dem Sohn'

Katerinenstadt, Russia, 1917

In English this hymn is known as "Praise
God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

Ehr' sei dem Vater und dem Sohn,
Dem Heil'gen Geist auf einem Thron;
Der Heiligen Dreinigkeit
Sei Lob und Preis in Ewigkeit.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above you heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

A warm welcome
to these new chapter members!

Leroy & Suzanne Brungardt

Louise A. Dechant

Gerald & Sylvia Gross

Orville & Dolores Hazelhorst

Clara Nadine Kroeger

Mary Ann Legleiter

Mary Ann Randa

Alvin Schoenberger

Pamela Kay Mermis Wolf



A history of Brazil's Volga Germans, pt. 4

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.

On their return to Ponta Grossa, the explorers were received with a noisy party, a lot of music, drink and, on the following day, a Mass of thanksgiving for their happy return. In the afternoon, the Germans went to talk with Commander Augusto Ribas, a local political boss. Like all good politicians, he heard the report with attention and promised to intercede in favor of the settlers, who held the firm purpose of dispersing for the North. But he also noticed the damage that would result for the area if such orderly immigrants abruptly exited. Therefore, he decided to delay as long as possible the resolution of the subject. But the Germans didn't let themselves be deceived for very long. They arranged a new meeting with their Protestant compatriots of the colonies of the municipal district of Palmeira, and they decided to go directly to Rio de Janeiro for a personal understanding with the Emperor. And again Georg Holzmann, Georg Dechandt, and Karl Hartmann went in search of D. Pedro II, taking a trip that lasted three months and was full of the unexpected.

During their audience with D. Pedro, the Emperor registered a lot of interest

in the men's appeal and, without need of an interpreter, he answered, "Go back to your farming and wait for my next visit, because I have been planning a trip to Paraná. Be calm, and know that I personally will solve your problems."

As he had promised, D. Pedro II visited Ponta Grossa on May 26, 1880. Dr. David Carneiro quotes a newspaper account of the trip in his book *D. Pedro II in the Province of Paraná*: "Today he visited the colonial nuclei Otávio, Taquari, and Tavares Bastos, which stand in a flattering state and show more regularity than the other ones up to now visited, whose condition is truly terrible. To speak of colonial prosperity in the Province of Paraná is to utter astonishing lies. His Majesty has been badly impressed at whatever he has been seeing, and equally all that accompany him share the same opinion. The causes of the failure of the Volga German colonization include bad administration, bad choice and purchase of lands, and bad advice given to the settlers."

However, since 1879, the Volga Germans located in Brazil had known

that their compatriots who had crossed the Atlantic Ocean bound for the United States and Argentina were making the largest success. In those two great republics, the cultivation of wheat had taken hold.

Many who still had the means sold everything they had and left for the United States and, in larger numbers, for Argentina. Still others went back to Russia. Of every four who first came to Brazil, three eventually left the country.

For instance, the colony of Tavares Bastos, founded by fifty families at the end of 1877, by March of 1879 held only thirty. This is according to data in the State Public File, which records similar happenings with the other colonies. Agriculture yielded few returns, no matter how much the immigrants tried. The Sängers family, for instance, planted a lot of cassava and set up a great flour mill, but they ended up disabling it, and like many others, moved to the city in order to get work.

(to be continued)

THE SUNFLOWER CHAPTER OF THE AHSGR
with sponsorship from
THE VOLGA GERMAN ASSOCIATION OF ELLIS COUNTY
present the latest in

THE LAWRENCE WEIGEL MUSIC COLLECTION

CD cost is \$17 plus \$3 for shipping. To order, send a check payable to:

Sunflower Chapter
2301 Canal Boulevard
Hays, Kansas

For more information contact Kevin Rupp, krupp@ruraltel.net



NEWS & MEDIA TIDBITS

Holy Cross Church in Pfeifer was recently named one of the eight wonders of Kansas architecture in a statewide vote conducted by the Kansas Sampler Foundation. Over a seven-week period, more than 8,000 voters from 43 different states participated in the selection of the eight architectural wonders.

Other winners were the Chase County Courthouse in Cottonwood Falls, the Cooper Barn in Colby, the Fromme-Birney Round Barn in Mullinville, the Kansas State Capitol in Topeka, the Lebold Mansion in Abilene, the Ness County Bank Building in Ness City, and the Seelya Mansion in Abilene.

Chapter members
Verlin and Henrietta Dreiling
celebrated their 60th anniversary
on July 5. *Salute!*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sorry that we did not get enough interest in the Casper AHSGR Convention to hire a bus. From the members that do attend, we expect a full report at our next meeting!

This year's bountiful golden wheat harvest made the farmers happy! (Me, too!)

Our summer chapter meeting is scheduled for Sunday, August 17. The social begins at noon; the meal, at 12:30; and the program at 1:30. Your chapter will provide a free fried chicken dinner with all the trimmings. We ask members to bring a dessert to share. For food preparation purposes, please call Hospitality Chair Dolores Pfannenstiel (625-6542) now for reservations. You all come to enjoy an indoor picnic! Business, if any, will be short, and there will be door prizes.

We have a great program arranged for you! A Topeka AHSGR member, Frank Jacobs, is hosting a student from Germany with ancestral connections to Pfeifer, Russia. He will give a short presentation, then take questions. See p. 10 for more details about Waldemar Kiesner. His presentation should be exciting! (No sleeping, please!)

A hearty thank you to all who completed and returned the member survey form. The results are given on this page.

Don't be "chicken"--hope to see you at the dinner! Make reservations now.

--Joe Werth

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Oops, again! I have never had a head for numbers. When people asked me how many responded to our recent member survey, I said, "About a gazillion." It turns out it was fewer than that. Results of the survey are given at the right. Thanks to all who gave their input. Anything connected with music seems to be the clear winner, but there is also great interest in life in Old Russia, local village customs, German cooking, and German faith life.

Because of a miscommunication, our last newsletter was printed in color again. Now we are on track for printing much more economical black-and-white newsletters. Northwestern Printers of Hays remains our printer of choice because they do excellent work and they have always been big supporters of our chapter.

If you wish to receive the newsletter by e-mail and print it in color at home, please send me your e-mail address if I don't have it already. You can reach me at alice53pfeifer@yahoo.com.

Thanks once again to all who made my life easier by contributing to this issue! Those excellent persons are Judy Hoffman, Carlos Alberto Schwab, Norma (Reichert) Pipkin, Francis King by way of Carol Brull, and the late Helen Jira by way of her daughter Fran Kovach. Kevin Rupp supplied the information on the new Weigel CD and www.gulagletters.com.

--Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

Members reveal their interests

Here are the results of the member survey taken at the last meeting.

Cited areas of interest were:

- life in Old Russia, 4
- life in frontier USA, 2
- local village customs, 4
- sacred music, 3
- holidays, 1
- village dialects, 1
- humor, 2
- faith life, 4
- how to restore and preserve old photos, 3
- how to do a genealogy, 2
- how to write your family's story, 3
- children's toys and games, 1
- learning to sing German songs, 5
- listening to others sing in German, 4
- folk music, 3
- folk dance, 3
- foods, 1
- folk medicine, 2

Comments included:

--[Tell about] items that our parents and grandparents used to cook in their days.

--We always love Wes Windholz, Joe Erbert, and Galen Schmidtberger's music.

--I have old pictures that need restoring.

--I can't carry a tune, but I would enjoy learning more. Always enjoy any kind of dances. And could you provide us partners to dance????

--Enjoy all recipes, always need new ideas or recipes.

--[Would like to know about] making German Grebble, Kase Sacks, anything in the German food line.

--Always love Pfeifer band, Galen Schmidtberger songs, old-time German music

CALENDAR

Here are some upcoming events
you won't want to miss!

SUNDAY, AUGUST 17

At 1:30 p.m. Waldemar Kiesner will give a program at our annual summer picnic in Antonino. He is a 24-year-old college student studying English, social science, and history. Born in Siberia of a Russian father and a Volga German mother, he emigrated to Germany with his family in 1993. He is in the States for two months to upgrade his English and to learn all he can about the American way of life.

Waldemar's grandfather, Alexander Kiesner, was born in Saratov, Russia, and lived in Pfeifer until his deportation to Siberia on August 28, 1941. Alexander is still alive. Waldemar's great-grandfather, Johann Kiesner, was born and raised in Pfeifer but died in 1942 during the repression of Stalin. Waldemar's grandmother, Alexander's wife, was named Maria Lell, and she too was born and raised in Pfeifer. Maria's mother, Barbara Lell, was a daughter of Philip Jackob born in Pfeifer in 1888.

Think ahead of time about the questions you'd like to ask Waldemar!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

At 5:30 p.m., the Sisters of St. Agnes who live in Kansas will celebrate their congregation's 150th anniversary during a special Mass at St. Joseph's Church in Hays. A reception in the Kennedy Middle School cafeteria will follow. The congregation began in Wisconsin in 1858, but since 1884, more than 160 Kansas women of Volga German descent have become Sisters of St. Agnes. One of them, Sister Judith Schmidt, served as the congregation's superior general from 1977 to 1985.

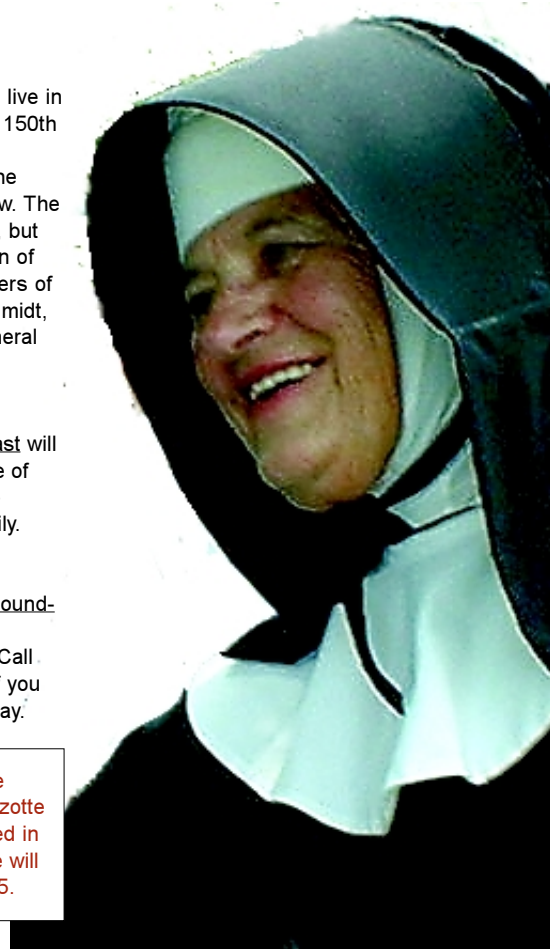
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

All morning, the Stars and Stripes Breakfast will be served at the VFW in Hays. This is one of our chapter's most important annual fund-raisers, so come on out and treat the family.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25

Beginning at 9 a.m., the annual Kansas Round-Up of Chapters will take place at the Best Western on North 53rd Street in Wichita. Call 316-832-9387 to reserve a room for \$70 if you wish to stay overnight on Friday or Saturday.

Sister Judith Schmidt CSA, a Catherine native, impersonates Mother Agnes Hazotte in a sesquicentennial program presented in Wisconsin on July 17. It is possible she will reprise her role in Hays on September 5.



SUNFLOWER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

1703 Henry Drive, Apt. B
Hays, KS 67601

e-mail: alice53pfeifer@yahoo.com
website: www.volgagerman.net



Inside this newsletter

- 1...Spring Meeting Report...Next Meeting
- 2...My First Trip to the Volga, Pt. 1
- 3...Liebenthal Locals, 1915...Germans in the Soviet Gulag
- 4...Why They Left Home, Pt. 3
- 5...News & Media Tidbits...Sr. Ventura Berens CSA
- 6...Jacob Brull, Kansas Pioneer, Pt. 1
- 7...*Ehr' sei dem Vater und dem Sohn*...New Chapter Members...Brazil's Volga Germans, Pt. 4
- 8...New CD from the Lawrence Weigel Collection
- 9...News & Media Tidbits...President's & Editor's Messages...Results of Chapter Member Survey
- 10...Upcoming Events