

NORTH STAR CHAPTER

JANUARY 2006

[HTTP://WWW.NORTHSTARCHAPTER.ORG](http://www.northstarchapter.org)

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 1

"A Soulful Sound"

Saturday, January 14, 2006, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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

We will begin our new year of programming with a showing of the new documentary "A Soulful Sound." This film about German-Russian music was produced by Prairie Public Broadcasting in Fargo with the help of the North Dakota Humanities Council, the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University, and the Germans from Russia Heritage Society.

The film celebrates the traditional music the Germans brought with them from Russia to America. It includes vocal and instrumental versions of religious music, lullabies, and folk music. Commentary is provided about the performances from artists across the region such as the University of Mary Concert Choir (Bismarck, ND), the Jamestown College Concert Choir (Jamestown, ND), Young People's Hutterite Singers (Hawley, MN), St. Andrew's Lutheran Centennial Choir (Zeeland, ND), and James Valley Singers (Jamestown, ND). Individual singers featured include Rosalinda Kloberdanz (Fargo, ND), Tony Wangler (Kintyre, ND), and Ron Volk (Harvey, ND). Bands from North Dakota play accordion music to recreate a traditional wedding reception.

The DVD has an accompanying CD of German-Russian music. Our chapter library has a copy of the DVD, and the CD can be ordered online from the NDSU Libraries. Come meet your friends at North Star Chapter and enjoy the musical memories.

Genealogy Workshop

Saturday, February 11, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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

Our bi-annual genealogy workshop will feature Deb Vevea, Director of the Family History Center, Church of the Latter Day Saints, presenting information pertinent to the operation of the Family History Center in Fridley.

Vevea is an ardent researcher who specializes in research of descendants from Poland. She will describe the services available through her organization and will be able to answer questions after her presentation. For beginners, this should offer some insight into a valuable research tool that is nearby and costs only for copies of the data developed. The North Star Chapter library will be open for research in the afternoon.

President's Message by Lil Ward

The Christmas and New Year celebration is a time for family. I'm so pleased to call the North Star Chapter members family. Happy New Year! I hope that you were blessed throughout the holiday season. As I take over the position of President from Duane Stabler, I have many reservations. Duane did an awesome job and will be a hard act to follow but with the members' help and patience I'll give it my best shot.

Except for Bob Gies, the 2006 Board has new officers, although several people held other officer positions in the past. Thanks to all the volunteers who have had and will have positions.

The big change this past year was moving to a new facility which is handicapped-accessible and can house our library. We heard some great speakers and we can't forget our food events. Weinachtsfest was a wonderful time of fellowship and, of course, eating, culminating with Santa Claus and his elves passing out Christmas "sacks." Santa also posed for pictures with many individuals.

If you have any suggestions for programs you would like to hear, let us know. There is talk about trying to have another Harvest Fest if we can get enough volunteers. Think about volunteering your time and talents to make this the best year ever. Thanks for being part of the Chapter and being part of my family.

North Star Chapter 2006 Officers

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WHAT YOUR DUES DO

By Cynthia Miller

There's no one who likes to get a solid deal for their money more than Germans from Russia. It's the time of year where the chapter would really like to see all members promptly pay their dues, so I thought I'd take a moment to explain how the local dues you pay help publish our newsletter.

Our newsletter is published four times a year, twice in the winter and twice in the fall. Some chapters are experimenting with having their newsletter appear exclusively on their web site, which cuts printing and mailing costs down to nothing. The Board has discussed this as an option, but realizing that many people do not have access to the internet, we will keep paper-publishing. Another idea is letting people opt to not receive a paper copy in the mail since our newsletter is also available on our fine web site. This is something that may be discussed more seriously in the future.

All contributions, editing, lay-out, and distribution is done for free by our wonderful and loved volunteers! The only expense the newsletter incurs is printing and mailing, but it is a big one. We buy the paper (goldenrod, so you are

sure to notice it in your mailbox!) and have the newsletter printed. From a member's recommendation, we found a small printing company in New Hope that gives us great service at a reasonable cost.

To keep costs down, we try to limit the newsletter to eight pages, which is four pieces of paper. Five pieces of paper gives us a ten-page newsletter, but also increases the printing costs considerably. Another internet option would be to have extra articles available exclusively on our web site.

We have non-profit status for mailing, but there still is a cost of 14-16 cents (depending on the zip code) per newsletter. The Post Office does not forward non-profit mail. If we do not have your correct address, the newsletter is returned to us at an additional cost of 60 cents per newsletter. That is why it is vital that you let us know if you move or have your address forwarded when you are traveling or go south for the winter. Ardella Bennett maintains the mailing list, makes the labels, addresses them, staples and folds (it costs extra if the printer does it), and takes the newsletters to the post office. Please contact her (952-884-4241 or

ajbennett@worldnet.att.net) as soon as possible if you have any address change.

If we receive word that someone may be interested in joining our chapter, Ardella adds this person to the mailing list for two newsletters. After that, we hope they will become paying members! We also send newsletters to other chapters and genealogical societies. If you are a current member, check the label on your newsletter. If your membership has expired, you may be carried through about two newsletter cycles, but then the service will stop until your membership is up-to-date. At least one chapter charges a subscription fee for the newsletter which is above its chapter dues, but so far we've been able to budget so that receiving the newsletter is a benefit of being a dues-paying member.

There's lots more that goes on behind the scenes, but this is the basics of the dues involved in producing our newsletter. If you have questions, comments, or ideas, please let an officer or newsletter staff member know.

Book Review: "The Children's Blizzard" by David Laskin

Review by Cynthia Miller

We could all probably recite the names of hurricanes, but few blizzards are bad enough to be named. The Halloween Blizzard of 1991 and the Armistice Day Blizzard of 1940 come to mind, but bad winter weather is so common in the Midwest, most of us brush it off as soon as it's over.

But for our grandparents, the great blizzard of January 1888 was a storm that may have defined their lives. It was called the Schoolchildren's Blizzard, because so many of the hundreds who died were children who were trying to make their way home from school. David Laskin gives an account of this storm in his book "The Children's Blizzard," and it is of special interest to Germans from Russia.

The storm engulfed the Midwest, but was particularly brutal in southern Dakota Territory, Nebraska, and western Minnesota. Like the Armistice Day Blizzard, the storm followed days of mild temperatures, fooling people into thinking a January thaw was on the way. Farmers let their cattle out to pasture for the first time in weeks, and mothers who had kept their children home from school due to the freezing weather sent them off, some not even wearing coats. When the storm hit, the temperature fell twenty degrees in less than five minutes, and the wind pulverized the snow so fine it was like an ice-crystal powder coating everything in seconds.

In addition to telling the stories of several immigrant families, including Norwegian and German-Russian Mennonites, Laskin provides explanations of how these types of storms develop and their consequences. He also gives a historical account of the emerging science of weather prediction, and under whose jurisdiction this fell. At the time, the Army was in charge of issuing warnings, and Laskin tells a fascinating story of a time when politics, commerce, and bureaucracy were more important than saving lives.

Reading this book gave me a renewed interest in an aspect of my family history. My great-grandmother, Christina Walz Herrmann, was 12 years old and living on her family's farm outside Freeman, South Dakota, in January 1888. She would have lived through this blizzard, yet I don't recall any family stories coming down from this. It is something I want to explore. Besides death, many families faced the loss of limbs due to frostbite or the loss of a good portion of their cattle. It was a breaking point for many families; after years of fighting the prairie, many decided to give up and return to their homelands or try again on the East or West Coast. This book tells yet another chapter in the resilience and perseverance of our ancestors. The book was published in 2004 and is available in paperback.

Directions to Berea Lutheran Church

7538 Emerson Ave. S., Minneapolis

From the intersection of 494 and Lyndale Ave., go north on Lyndale. Take a left on 76th St. (there is a service station on the NW corner of this intersection) and continue down 76th going west. Turn right on Emerson Ave. The church is on the immediate left with the parking lot behind (north side of the church). We will meet downstairs.. All meetings are held at this location unless otherwise noted.

Time Out for Kuchen

by Carol Just

When I bite into a wedge of fruit and custard kuchen I'm usually transported to memories of Mom, Grandma, special aunts and warm kitchens wafting with that sweet smell of yeast dough, custard, vanilla and cinnamon. I encounter the memories of family events, where kuchen was always present, and beloved family members who are no longer with us.

Fruit and custard kuchen is considered the "soul food" of the Germans from Russia. However, because of the fat and carbohydrate content, it doesn't score well on the food pyramid. Consequently, kuchen has become something of a holiday/special event/reunion food, along with sausage, knefpla, plachenda, strudla, dumplings, and halupsi. While I know how to prepare all these items, I don't make them often enough to feel like I'm very good at it. Still, my children, nieces, and nephews love these food items and always request they be on the menu. Chances are these food items invoke the same nostalgic memories. Social historians say that the foodways of an ethnic culture are the last to die. I hope they're right. I hope that German Russian cooking/baking is still alive.

In December, my cousin Jeanette Aipperspach Jasmer joined me for a kuchen bake-off. We made prune, apricot, peach, and apple kuchen. We spoke to my mother at her home in LaMoure, ND, during the process, seeking her advice and moral support. It gave us an opportunity to talk about our family memories and the traditions we want to maintain for our descendants. While we aren't as skilled at kuchen making as our mothers, the final product turned out well and no doubt will improve with each effort. We plan to make this an annual endeavor.

In a busy season when we are blasted with materialistic messages about what "we have to own/buy/give," when our lives seem so fractured while we are pulled in so many directions, I wouldn't trade those few hours of listening to Christmas carols while we prepared the food that has sustained our families for generations for anything.

Please Take Note

If you know of a family reunion, town celebration, or heritage event coming up this summer, please let newsletter editor Cindy Miller know. We may be able to list these in the next newsletter, which is the last one that will be published before summer (after all, the days are already getting longer!).

If you are having your mail forwarded (even if you aren't moving), please contact Ardella Bennett. The newsletter cannot be forwarded to another address by the post office, and it costs the chapter money when newsletters are returned.

Library Corner By Bernie Becker

January's meeting program will introduce you to "A Soulful Sound," a music DVD featuring a variety of German Russian music. You'll want to check it out from our library in coming months to take advantage of the bonus section at the end—excess material they did not include in the main portion. You'll see and hear choirs, individual musicians, a wedding dance, and a Dutch Hop dance. This professionally made DVD, with its wide variety of music, will please you.

Our own North Star members, Marty Suppan and Evelyn Tonra, are featured in the new video "Recipes from Grandma's Kitchen, Vol. 2." Included is a booklet containing the recipes used in the video, plus a few bonus recipes.

Most of our 2005 budget was used to purchase two new library carts. They are double-sided and each cart gives us six shelves. Notice the big wheels making them easy to move from our storage area to our meeting room.

Thanks to all our members who returned the books they had misplaced or forgotten to return for some time. Our list of missing book has shrunk considerably. And I also want to give a special thank you to those who have made trips to Ardella Bennet's or my house to return books.

A big thank you to Louise Smith of Plymouth, MN. She called me and asked if we could use books. She is moving and needed to give them a new home. She gave us about twenty books in like-new condition. I'll be working on incorporating them into our library, but probably will not get them all there by the January meeting. I'll surely try to have them there for the Genealogy meeting in February. Several are books on writing your family history, and how to do genealogical research.

Please let Paul or me know if you hear of new books that would be of particular interest to our North Star Chapter members.

German Beer Soup (Biersuppe)

3 bottles or cans (12 oz.) beer

1/2 cup brown sugar

4 egg yolks

1/2 cup sour cream

1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Combine the beer and brown sugar in a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Remove from the heat. Whisk the egg yolks and sour cream together in a small bowl. Stir in about 1/2 cup of the hot beer mixture, then stir the egg mixture into the beer. Season with cinnamon, salt, and pepper and stir over low heat - do not boil - until the soup is slightly thickened. Makes four to six servings.

From the Chef at Worldwide Recipes

North Star Chapter

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Program Roundup By Bob Gies

December 3, 2005, marked the day of another interesting and enjoyable renewal of the celebration of our common heritage with the sharing of distinctive German-Russian food delights. We had a serenade of Christmas music by Eloise Kelle, some sing-alongs of favorite Christmas songs, capped off by sharing Christmas stories, moderated by long-time member Carol Just. Again, we were privileged to be led in prayer by Al Oster, another long-time member. Every comment I heard regarding the food was prefaced by an exhibit of exuberance. Gosh, what a talented membership we have!

There was also a visit from Santa, bearing gifts of candies and other traditional treats that we all remember with great warmth from our childhood. We are not absolutely sure this was the "REAL" Santa but we did observe that Ray Current was not in the area while Santa paid his visit. The 80+ attendees were really enthusiastic about this event. As usual, Santa supplied plenty of gifts and there were some left over for grandchildren and others.

You can read about our January and February programs on the front page. On March 11, 2006, Joachim (Yogi) Pusch will return for a second presentation about his experience as a German soldier in World War II. There have been many requests to have him back to continue sharing his special insight into this period of world history. Come again and learn firsthand what it was like as a German soldier.

On April 22, 2006, we will have our annual banquet. Potlucks have been so well-received that we will continue this for the spring banquet at Berea Lutheran Church. There is no set program for this event as yet, but several potential interesting options are being investigated

Sei Unser Gast Cookbooks

Share your German Russian heritage with family and friends. *Sei Unser Gast* cookbooks make the perfect gift for birthdays, graduations, showers, weddings, anniversaries, and holidays. Give them to say "Danke schön." Donate copies to the libraries and schools in your community.

Complete this order form and send it with a check, payable in U.S. dollars to: Cookbook Orders, North Star Chapter of Minnesota, P.O. Box 583642, Minneapolis, MN 55458 - 3642. Please make your check payable to: "North Star Chapter"

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Return Service Requested

Local dues are \$12.00 per year per family, plus membership in either AHSGR or GRHS.
AHSGR members please submit \$62 (\$50 for AHSGR, \$12 for North Star membership).
GRHS members please submit \$52 (\$40 for GRHS, \$12 for North Star membership).
Please make your check payable to North Star Chapter and mail it to:
Jorgiann Walther, 4413 Zenith Avenue, Minneapolis MN 55422
Questions: contact Jorgiann at 763-533-4090

Name(s)

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2006 MEMBERSHIP FORM