

NORTH STAR CHAPTER

MARCH 2006

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

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 2

Fighting for Hitler: A German Soldier's Story, Part 2

Saturday, March 11, 2006, 1:00 p.m.

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

We are pleased to have a return to our midst by Joachim (Yogi) Pusch. You may recall that he served in the German Army during WWII and shared some of his experiences with us last spring. Mr. Pusch has lived in America for over 50 years, but it's been less than two years that he has been telling his story, beginning with a presentation at Fort Snelling to former U.S. soldiers.

There was great participation in the question session following his presentation. Many people expressed interest in having him return. This is your chance to gain further insight into a part of the history of the world from one person's experienced viewpoint. We hope you can come and enjoy Yogi's spirited program.

Annual Spring Banquet

Saturday, April 22, 2006, 5:30 p.m.

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

To end our program year on a high note, we will have our second annual Potluck Banquet. This will be the last meeting until fall, so come one and all, and enjoy the fellowship and camaraderie with your fellow Germans from Russia. The program after the dinner is a special engagement by the Minnesota Go4s (think of the University of Minnesota and say it fast to know what their name means), a barbershop quartet of men who have been singing together for many years and have placed well in contests in prior years.

The program will be a spirited presentation sprinkled with some comedic action and will be fast-moving. It has to be fast-moving in order to keep us all awake after the sumptuous repast we will enjoy. The festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:00 p.m. Eating utensils will be provided, as well as coffee, tea, water, and punch. Be sure to bring your favorite dishes so others can enjoy them, prepared with as much care as they were by your grandmothers and mothers.

President's Message By Lil Ward

As you read this quarterly newsletter the 2006 Winter Olympics will be in the finals days or just have ended. I really enjoy watching the events and the many stories they bring to us of the athletes' hard road to the Olympics and their quest for the gold. It reminds me of our ancestors who came from Russia to this great USA and made it possible for us to also reach for the gold. Do you ever think of where we would be if they had not left Germany for Russia and then again left Russia for a new homeland? I feel blessed that my ancestors chose to move to America.

Bob Gies has a great year of programs lined up for us which are listed in this newsletter. Mark your calendars with the dates and times. For the Spring Banquet we again will be doing a pot luck meal and would like each of you to "bring a bit more" food. We have been running out of the hot dishes/main food at the last couple pot lucks so we ask that you add another sausage, or potato, or open another can of whatever to your dish to share. Drinks, plates, cups and silverware will be supplied by the Chapter.

If you email any of the officers or chairpersons please put something about the North Star
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North Star Chapter 2006 Officers

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2006 GRHS Convention

By Roger Hess

In four months the doors will open at the Portland Airport Holiday Inn and the Host Chapter GROW and its members will be welcoming you and all of the 2006 GRHS Conventioneers. I hope that will include YOU. Last count shows that 753 room nights have been reserved by attendees! Others coming via motor home/trailers have been checking out Portland RV sites and are not included in the above numbers. Time is of the essence to get your room reserved to be staying at the Convention Center. Please call direct to 503-256-5000 for best results in your booking. You can also call 1-800-465-4329.

Remember the address, 8439 NE Columbia Blvd, Portland, OR 97220, and the dates, 12-16 July 2006. I expect that the Holiday Inn will be sold out before the Convention Registration Booklet will be mailed in April. We are expecting that to happen, so do not hesitate and get your booking done ASAP. We have begun preparations with the Holiday Inn to make reciprocal arrangements with other hotels, but that will not provide the same convenience.

As many as 50 presenters will be giving workshops and speaking on interesting topics, some of which you have not previously had opportunity to hear. No duplicate or repeat sessions are scheduled at this time and it will require you to choose your area of interest carefully to maximize your learning and take advantage of these exclusive opportunities. Wednesday will be set aside for tours if you can arrive on July 12.

If you have connection to the internet, you can view the 2006 Convention

program as the approximate bi-monthly drafts reveal new additions, and revisions before the booklet is put together. We are receiving registrations now. You can register by logging onto www.grhs.org/grow/06convention/2006 and completing the registration on page 8 (this could vary a little). We believe the programming schedule is about 98% complete. Also, you can learn about some of the speakers and a brief description of their topic at www.grhs.org/grow/06convention/titles_synopsis.

New German-Russian Humor CD

Larry Weigel is producing a series of CDs featuring his father, Lawrence Weigel. The first CD, "Volga German Folk Humor," is now available. The CD features a humorous talk recorded at the 1989 AHSGR convention in Lincoln. It includes funny stories such as "Der Mister" from Russia, Good Schmelling Stuff, The Pfeifer Fights, The Arrival of the Bishop in Munjor, and Two Men in a Tavern in Schoenchen. The recording ends with old-fashioned Volga German music played on Lawrence's keyboard organ.

The CD can be purchased for \$18.00 (included shipping and handling) from the Sunflower Chapter, 2301 Canal Blvd., Hays, KS 67601

Making Room For All the Pieces

by Cynthia Miller

As I grew up surrounded by Germans, I always wanted to be different. Not only was I a member of the predominant heritage group in my area, I was a member of one of the predominant immigrant groups in the nation. I longed for something a bit more exciting.

Maybe it was because, unlike the Irish, we didn't have our own celebration day; unlike the Italians, we didn't have food like spaghetti; unlike the British, we didn't have a recognizable flag. Germans melted seamlessly into American life, besides some rough patches during the wars.

When I learned that Russia played a part in my heritage, I was excited. No one I knew was Russian! It was a mysterious, scary country, steeped as we were in the Cold War. It was a little act of rebellion to be proud of being from a country that subversive. My grandfather couldn't remember it, and my great-grandparents were dead, but I was from Russia.

Then I learned, of course, that I wasn't Russian at all. No matter where my people had been born, no matter what it said on official immigration papers, no matter what the neighbors thought, I wasn't Russian. I was as German as ever, as German as everyone around me.

This information settled into me for awhile, and then I began to explore what it meant to be a "native" of one country, "from" another country, and actually living in a third. Perhaps living in Minnesota and Iowa, giving up being North Dakotan, helped. Maybe it was living in England as an American that gave me more insight.

But I'm definitely starting to reconcile all these parts of me. I don't believe, as many of my ancestors did, that Russia can and should be forgotten. I believe place has a big influence in people's souls that can't be denied. I may live out of North Dakota for the rest of my life, but I don't think I'll ever stop thinking of myself that way.

So just as America made room for all nationalities, I think this German can make room for also being Russian, American, North Dakotan, Minnesotan, maybe even British sometimes. I think it is great progress that an immigrant's granddaughter can now feel free to move in whatever worlds she chooses. I don't have to lose any part of me, either to fit in or to feel special. I can add these interesting pieces while still keeping my heritage alive.

New Members

The North Star Chapter would like to welcome the following new members:

Myrle and Jill Reiswig, Plymouth; Arlene Reed, St Paul; Kenneth Hesterman, Plymouth; Kenneth Kossan, Hastings; David Sudermann and Mary Cisar, Northfield; Leroy Pietz, St Louis Park; Corinne Becker, Minneapolis; Ron & Pamela Scherbenski, St Louis Park.

Library Corner By Bernie Becker

A big thank you to Marilyn J. Vielhaber for contributing several valuable books to our library. Among them you will find Stumpp's book, *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 to 1862; From Catherine to Khrushchev; The Story of the German Russians; Roscoe, the First 100 Years; Roscoe Diamond Jubilee; Nicholas And Alexandra* by Robert K. Massie; *Journeys Across Russia - The Soviet Union Today; Homesteaders On the Steppe* by Joseph S. Height; and *The German-Russians* by Karl Stumpp.

Does anyone have on their shelves the books, *Glueckstal Colonies Births & Marriages 1833-1900* and *Glueckstal Colonies Deaths 1833-1900*? The person whose name appears on the cards as having checked them out insists she does not have them.

A 56-page booklet, its inner pages printed on yellowed newsprint, has hidden on our shelves since January 1990 when Al Oster checked it out. The card shows no other activity since then. It was one of the non-descript booklets I had put aside while recording the "important" books in the library makeover. Now the time had come to try to figure out what to do with this leftover stuff. This booklet isn't much to look at, but is a wealth of photos and information.

The picture on the cover of *Country School Legacy – Humanities on the Frontier* is a 1902 one-room school, complete with a pot-bellied stove, plank floor, eight students of various ages and one teacher. Chapter one is titled *Country School Architecture*. "In 1886 a sod schoolhouse in Custer County, Nebraska was all the community could afford; by 1902 the citizens of Cando, North Dakota had built a high school massive in its proportions. The immigrants were here to stay."

You'll find Rules for Teachers, Teachers' Salaries, Teacher Training and Certificates, etc. I particularly liked the chapter titled: *Country Schools and Americanization*. There were no lessons printed in Norwegian, German, or Swedish to accommodate the immigrants. The pictures are worth picking up the book. It covers the Midwest – Wyoming to Nebraska, the Dakotas and more. You'll find it in the "J-4" section.

I've found so many treasures in our library I find it difficult not to go on and on telling you about them. But I want to draw your attention to one more subject. Do you have Mennonite roots? There is a folder in the "J" section titled *The Heritage Fair at Heritage Village, Mountain Lake, MN*. It is stuffed with several years of newspaper supplements about this annual fair. They are full of photos, stories and history. Also in this section are six periodicals called "*Mennonite Family History*." Even if you aren't Mennonite you'll find them interesting. Page 17 of the January 1987 issue has "*The Mysterious Will of Aerent Hendricks*." These magazines are filled with surnames you might be

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Iron Cross Maker Keeps the Art Alive

By Cynthia Miller

At the January 2006 meeting, Chapter president Lil Ward brought a special treat – an iron cross that her family had commissioned for the grave of her mother's little sister who died when she was a baby, and had never had a grave marker. The cross was made by Jeff Malm of Kulm, ND, and his story is unique.

Jeff was paralyzed in a farm accident 15 years ago. He had experience as a welder, so instead of making tools, Jeff began making iron crosses. His ancestry is Swedish, but he had always been interested in the German-Russian tradition of artistic iron crosses. Jeff received an apprenticeship from the North Dakota Council on the Arts. His father and grandfather were blacksmiths, so Jeff believes iron working is in his blood.

Jeff looks at old photos to get ideas for designs, but his crosses are all original, including his signature piece, a rose made from many iron petals. As those of you who have cross makers in your family know, it was common for each artist to have a signature style to identify his work. Jeff is not angry about his accident, but feels glad to be alive and grateful for a God-given talent that allows him to continue to work.

Jeff's largest creation will be housed at the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at the North Dakota State University library. His crosses come in a variety of sizes and styles, ranging in price from \$100 to \$500. It takes him several weeks to complete each piece. Jeff can be reached at 7071 70th St. SE, Kulm ND 58456, 701-647-2729, or jucyleff@drtel.net.

NOTE: This article was written with information published in an article by Jackie Hyra in the Jamestown, ND, Sun, August 8, 2005.

Library Corner (continued from page 5)

searching for.

Here are other Mennonite interest suggestions. Under "A-1" is a biography, *Siberian Diary of Aaron P. Toews*. Toews was first a teacher, then a minister in Ukraine. Family Histories ("B" section) has *As it Was – told by John Wannow*—covers Danzig Germany to Karinental Russia, and *The Schmidt Saga: One Pioneer Family*. The "C" section has *Princes, Potentates, & Plain People – Saga of the Germans from Russia*, most of the stories of a South Dakota setting – again, Mennonite interest. Can you see why it has taken me a full year to accomplish this job of organizing the library? Happy Research!

Program Roundup By Bob Gies

Did you know that the AHSGR library in Lincoln, NE, is regarded by some researchers as the most comprehensive and far-reaching repository of books and other documents regarding the history of the Germans from Russia? There is a mechanism to borrow the books and other documents if you have interest in so doing. If you have interest in utilizing these services please contact the Research Librarian at AHSGR Headquarters in Lincoln, NE.

So that you can mark your calendars for the rest of the year, we have set the meeting dates in the fall. After the summer break we will go to the Glockenspiel again on September 16, 2006. There was a 41 person turnout when we did this last September and all had a great afternoon getting reacquainted and gearing up for the fall sessions. With advance knowledge, this can become a recruiting tool. Let prospective members see what an enjoyable, happy, yet industrious group we are. Lunch will begin at 12:00 noon and each will order off the menu and be responsible for the cost of their meal.

On October 4, 2006, we will meet at Berea Lutheran Church and have a program presented about the life of an author, along with a review of one of her published books. If not that, we may have a program regarding the changes in some of the religions of the world as it may impact on our group. If not that, we may have a program presented by a professional photographer showing some churches, some old picturesque barns, or some other aspect of this man's work.

November 14, 2006, we will meet at Berea Lutheran Church for the semi-annual genealogy session and we hope to have Bonnie Anderson present. She is a highly regarded and active researcher into German-Russian history and culture in the Caucasus.

That brings us again to Weinachtsfest on December 2, 2006. There will be further notices about the program and what you can do to assist in making this highlight of our year a huge success as it has been in the past. These dates and programs may be subject to change, but will be finalized by the time you get your next newsletter in August

GRHS Youth Essay Contest

Encourage your grandchildren to enter The Germans from Russia Heritage Society's annual Youth Essay Contest. This year's theme is "Germany/ Russia/ Americas... Giant Steppes toward Freedom." The contest is open to all students in public, private, parochial or home schools and universities, from sixth grade to college undergraduate. The subject of the paper must be related to the German-Russian Heritage and must be the contestant's original work; however, the student does not need to be of German-Russian heritage to enter the contest.

The completed essay and entry form must be postmarked by 31 March 2006. A \$750 scholarship will be awarded to the winning university entry and a \$250 scholarship to the winning high school senior entry. Cash awards of \$150 and trophies will be awarded to Middle School and High School winning entries. The winning essays will be announced at the 2006 GRHS Convention in Portland OR on 12-16 July 2006. Contest information and entry blanks can be downloaded at www.grhs.org/docs/essay.html, or call Vera Hoff, Chair of the GRHS Youth Committee, at 605-7188-4116.

Computer Corner By Duane Stabler

It's been a while since we've last taken a look at websites that provide information and clues into genealogical research. Take some time to take a look at these sites and bookmark those you'll want for later use.

Plautdietsch on-line dictionary from the Mennonites might be good to check out, with information that might be of interest depending on the dialect you remember. www.mennolink.org/cgi-bin/dictcgi

If you've not checked out the Ellis Island site in some time, it's time to revisit. They are always updating it at www.ellisland.org. Ellis Island opened in 1892 but if your family came through New York before that time, check the Castle Garden database: www.castlegarden.org. There's a better portal for the Castle Garden (and Ellis Island) records at <http://stevemorse.org/> and I'd suggest is as the primary link to information from New York and other ports of entry on the eastern seaboard.

I have limited knowledge of Canadian websites but here's one to check: www.collectionscanada.ca/genealogy/022-500-e.html. Records for those who crossed the border from Canada into the U.S. don't start until 1895. The U.S. National Archives journal Prologue has an article at www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2000/fall/us-canada-immigration-records-1.html from the National Archives.

This website provides a means of locating veterans who are buried in one of the veterans' cemeteries. A veteran on this list is not necessarily a casualty of war, but is buried as a veteran: http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1

This site, http://maxpages.com/poland/Military_Records_Europe, covers eastern European records and also German Records. The folks with the best records are the French; the worse for obtaining information are the Austrians and the Russians. If you know the Group that your Military Personnel were serving under or the area, you might get lucky and find the equivalent to the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars, USA) or such. I have the complete records of WW1 for US personnel and the Complete set of Records of North Dakotans who fought in WW1.

<http://www.wolhynien.de> is in German but might be good for Volhynia research. <http://www.jewishgen.org/ShtetlSeeker/LocTown.asp> helps locate a city you are looking for in Central/Eastern Europe among other things. I've not checked it out fully so I'll stop since I've just provided you with many hours of on-line research.

Standing Committees 2006

Library	Bernie Becker and Paul Oberlander
Historian	Ardella Bennett
Genealogy/Folklore	Al Oster
Communications	Cynthia Miller
Public Relations/Publicity	Nancy Gertner

Special Committees

Hospitality	Art and Carol Stabner
Refreshments	Helen Kleingartner
Sunshine (cards)	Marlene Huber
Telephone	Evelyn Tonra

Other Committees

Sound System	Paul Winters and John Hafner
Newsletter	Bill Brooks and Ardella Bennett
Cinematography	Marvin Geske
Web Page	Duane Stabler
Cookbook Sales	Jaci Williams, Bill Brooks, Sam Brungardt

President's Message (continued from Page 2)

Chapter in the subject line that will be recognizable for us to feel free to open your email. With the problems with viruses I am very reluctant to open any email unless there is something in the subject line that I recognize.

I hope you are having a good winter. See you at the meetings.

2006 AHSGR Convention

The annual AHSGR national convention will be held August 14-20, 2006, in Lincoln, NE. There aren't too many details yet on specific presentations, but it will include the annual storytelling contest, as well as computer work stations for the Saving Our Ancestral Records (SOAR) computer-based records, some village records, and the AHSGR Surname file containing over 250,000 names, plus paper records including the headquarters obituary file, village maps, and descendant charts based on records from Russia are only a few of the tools available to convention researchers. For more information as it becomes available, please check their web site at www.ahsgr.org.

American Historical Society
Of Germans From Russia

**North Star Chapter
Of Minnesota**

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2006 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Name(s) _____

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Phone _____ Email _____

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 Waltner, 4413 Zenith Avenue N., Robbinsdale MN 55422

Questions: contact Jorgiann at 763-533-4090