

# North Star Chapter

September 2006

<http://www.northstarchapter.org/>

Volume 31 Number 3

## North Star Chapter Lunch Social

Saturday, September 16, 2006, 11:45 AM

*Glockenspiel Restaurant, 605 W. 7<sup>th</sup> St., St. Paul, MN*

Last fall's opening event at Glockenspiel was such a success that we've decided to do it again. Join us for a lunch social to start our new program year. Over 40 members attended last year's lunch and enjoyed the fabulous food and reconnecting with friends after a busy summer. We will order off the menu and each party is responsible for the cost of their meal. Please call Bob Gies at 651-994-7237 by Monday, September 11, to make your reservation, and leave a message if Bob doesn't answer.

For more information, you can visit the restaurant's web site at [www.glockenspielrestaurant.com](http://www.glockenspielrestaurant.com). If you need directions to the restaurant, please let Bob know when you call in your reservation. We look forward to seeing everyone for a successful, happy lunch.

## The Rhubarb King: German-Russian Poetry

Saturday, October 7, 2006, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

*Berea Lutheran Church, 7538 Emerson Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN*

Writer Sharon Chmielarz is the featured speaker for our October program. Sharon is the daughter of a German-Russian father and a German mother. She will be reading from her new book of poetry, "The Rhubarb King." The poems feature memories from Sharon's North Dakota childhood, as well as stories of people, including Germans from Russia, who share similar backgrounds before leaving their farm environment to pursue careers in medicine, business, and education. Many of us will relate to the memories Sharon creates in her poetry.

Sharon's work has earned her a place as a finalist in the National Poetry Series. She has been published in a number of venues, including travel memoir. Please join us for a fascinating look into German-Russian habits and traits.

## Upcoming Events

November 4, 2006 – Genealogy Workshop with Deb Vevea

December 2, 2006 – Weinachtsfest Potluck



## **President's Message** by Lil Ward

I hope everyone had a wonderful summer and survived the heat and humidity. Now it's time to get back to Chapter business as usual. Bob Gies has lined up some great programs for the fall and winter. Hope you can attend and bring a friend.

We have so many great volunteers who do many tasks – from greeters, set up and take down crews for meetings, officers, committee chairperson and video taping, just to mention a few. Without them our organization could not function. Let us know how you are willing to share your talents.

Our German/Russian ancestors were willing to take risks to come to America and worked hard to make a better life for their families. Sometimes all they brought with them was their faith. Wouldn't they have loved to have a North Star Chapter to belong to? Because of all of you, we have a great Chapter and I want to thank you for your support. I look forward to seeing you in the upcoming months.

## **Have You Read Some Good Poetry Lately?** by Bernie Becker

If you haven't read any good poetry lately, you'll want to take a look at "The Rhubarb King," a book of poems by Sharon Chmielarz. Sharon has graciously donated her book of poems that will stir memories. Born in Mobridge, South Dakota, Sharon Chmielarz is the author of several books you'll want to read once you read this one.

"The Rhubarb King" is no other than her father poised for a portrait in the rhubarb patch. Who of us can't picture that scene. For all of his rough German ways, and in spite of youthful anger towards her father, Sharon's nostalgic poetry reveals be-

grudging love.

"From harsh and sometimes discouraging materials, Sharon Chmielarz has made an uncompromising beauty," writes one reviewer. Another writes, "Chmielarz searches half-way around the world in the old country from which he (the Rhubarb King) sprang, for some way to understand him."

Sharon will be our featured speaker for the October program.

## **North Star Chapter 2006 Officers**

**President**  
Lil Ward  
763-784-8626  
wardday@foxinternet.com

**2<sup>nd</sup> VP/Membership**  
Jorgiann Waltner  
763-533-4090

**Secretary**  
Bernie Becker  
952-929-5577  
bernaldas@aol.com

**1<sup>st</sup> VP/Program Chair**  
Bob Gies  
651-994-7237  
RYGIES@aol.com

**Treasurer**  
Jaci Williams  
612-529-7850  
Jdaye119@aol.com



## **GRHS Affiliation Moves Closer to Ratification** by Duane Stabler

As I write this update, I continue to work with GRHS's New Chapter committee. They have reviewed the initial amendments we made last spring and have had some additional suggestions and requests. We also became aware that we'd overlooked some needed changes (details) so I took the time to sit down with one of the committee members during the GRHS convention in Portland this July. With that detail, I've further made some suggested amendments to correct the oversights and further refine the documents to meet GRHS requirements.

This detail will soon go back to GRHS for one final review and as I write this, Jim Gessele and I are working to make sure none of the requirements will conflict with AHSGR, the 501c requirements, and the State of Minnesota incorporation. Roger Haas, chairperson of the GRHS committee, assures me that he sees nothing preventing final ratification of this affiliation.

In summary, all indications are that our desire to affiliate with GRHS is achievable without becoming an issue for all concerned. I will be presenting the final draft of the amendments to the North Star Chapter Board of Directors for their consideration during the next scheduled board meeting. I expect to update all of you at the October business meeting and hope to provide the good news.

## **Endangered Species Making a Comeback** by Nancy Gertner

Just when we think Germans from Russia are going extinct, someone shows us they still know how to make babies. Congratulations to chapter members Cynthia Miller and Sean Beaton, who are the parents of Baby Gus, born a few weeks early and weighing three pounds and three ounces. This Twenty-First Century baby reminds us of how much life has changed since our ancestors lived in sod houses on the prairie. The marvels of modern medicine are available to help our babies with immature lungs breathe during those first critical hours of life when they need a little help. For photos of Gustave Charles Beaton and his story, check out this website at Caring Bridge: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/gusbeaton>

### **Two North Star Members Honored at GRHS Convention** By Duane Stabler

Freida and Alton Nusz established the Lane Alton Nusz Award in memory of their son. Money from the interest is used for these awards. There are two categories of awards. For the first, Rachel Schmidt, GRHS office secretary, keeps a record of all of the people that submitted pedigree charts during the last year. The names of those people are placed onto index cards and a random drawing is held. The winners receive a free one-year membership. The winners of one-year free membership were Ted W. Streible, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and Ella Melik, Moxee, WA.

The other award is \$50, which is awarded to a person nominated by a GRHS member for service to his/her chapter or to GRHS. A nomination form was included in the last issue of (continued on page 5)

### **Member News**

Lil and Dayton Ward celebrated their 45<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary August 13.

Bob and Rosalie Gies celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary September 3.

Gustave Charles Beaton, son of Cindy Miller and Sean Beaton, was born July 21 in St. Paul. Gus was named after his German-Russian great-grandfather Gustave Younker.



I hope I'm not alone when I admit that as I've gotten more involved in family history, I've started to think of my ancestors as my friends. I sometimes speak of people like Christina, Katharina, Stephen, and Johan as if they are friends of mine from across town, not long-dead ancestors I've never met, some of whom never even got to America.

That may seem strange, but I like thinking that my ancestors are sort of my buddies, people who are with me and who I can turn to for advice and guidance. Many cultures around the world encourage close relationships with ancestors that go beyond just remembrance and honor. It may seem whimsical, but I know it's gotten me through some tough stages.

When my son decided this summer that he wanted to enter the world almost three months early, after only six hours of labor and an emergency c-section, my husband and I were very anxious. But during those confusing, scary hours, my great-grandmother Maria came coming into my mind. She was married at 18 and had two children by age 20 when her family decided to come to America. With an 18-month-old toddler (my grandfather) and a six-week-old baby, she traveled thousands of miles to settle in North Dakota. She had two more children before dying at age 27 from an accidental gun shot.

Maria seemed to be telling me that everything was going to be fine, and I was reminded that even though what I was experiencing was rough, I could get through it as members of my family have been persevering for hundreds of years. I read an article recently saying that anyone of western European ancestry needs to remember that for some reason, their ancestors survived the Black Plague. Does that give us some kind of super DNA, the article asked. Maybe, maybe not, but it's an interesting thing to contemplate.

It's not just bad times when my ancestor friends show up. I named my son after my grandfather, who passed away three years before I was born. I like to tell my son about his great-grandfather, sharing the stories that my grandmother, parents, and aunts have told me. As I rock him and wait for him to be healthy enough to come home from the hospital, it's fun to remember stories like my grandfather taking my twin aunts fishing, and them making so much noise they scared away all the fish. I really believe that we don't have to actually have met our ancestors to "know" them. Learning their names and stories is all we need to add these long-gone family members to our list of good friends.

---

## **2006 GRHS Convention in Portland, Oregon** by Bernie Becker

The GROW (Oregon & Washington) Chapter outdid itself in presenting an outstanding convention. Art Flegel set the tone for the convention with a musical and oral presentation at the welcoming ceremony that left us all proud to be Americans. We may have German heritage with roots in Russia, but we are citizens of the USA and proud of it!

Chapters presented their banners while Lola M. Weber read a description and history of each banner that represented their area or chapter. One seldom does more than glance at the displayed banners, not considering the significance they portray.

(continued on page 7)



## Library Corner By Bernie Becker

It is time for an update on what has transpired in and for your North Star library. Convention time has come and gone and, as usual, the Bismarck library held fascination for Paul and me. Have you sent in your Pedigree Chart to both AHSGR and GRHS? Many conference participants diligently search them.

One of the books purchased since spring is "History of the Volga German Colonists" by Jacob E. Dietz. This monumental work is a translation from Russian to English. It is a fascinating documentation of the history, lives, economics, and politics of their times. "Einwanderung in das Wolgagebiet 1764-1767 Band 3" has been added. If you have Volga background, you will want to check out the many surnames listed, as well as study the included map.

A member who wishes to remain anonymous donated the following three books by Ron Vossler. "Why I Never Called Death the River" and "Lost Shawls and Pig Spleens" are light reading filled with folklore, anecdotes, and humor from the oral traditions of Germans from Russia in the Dakotas. Reading them will provide nostalgia, and chuckles. The third book, "We'll Meet Again in Heaven," contains translated letters printed in German papers (1925-1937) from Germans left behind in the Soviet Union.

A big thank you to Ardella Bennett. She has graciously provided us with a great selection from her shelves:

"Anecdotes of the Prairies" by Monsignor George P. Aberle

"The Bannisters" by Barbara Oaks A historical novel set in Dakota Territory, with autograph.

"The Bones of Plenty" by Lois Phillips Hudson A novel about a proud, independent North Dakota wheat farming family and its struggles during the depression years of 1933 & 1934.

"Clothes Lines, Party Lines & Hem Lines: Memories of North Dakota Homemakers"

"Courtin', Cookin' & Castor Oil: Memories of North Dakota Homemakers"

"Sods, Log & Tar Paper: Memories of North Dakota Homemakers"

"The History of the Hutterites" by John Hofer

"In Search of Your Canadian Roots" by Angus Baxter. Tracing your family tree in Canada

"The Last Farmer: An American Memoir" by Howard Kohn

"Prairie Wind, Blow Me Back" by Evelyn Dale Iverson

"Thunder on the Steppe" by Timothy J. & Rosalinda Klobardanz. Volga German folklife in a changing Russia

"The Womenfolk" by Julie Welle VerZuh. Life of pioneers

"Woman of the Prairie" by Barbara Oaks. A novel set in the state of South Dakota.

### Two North Star Members Honored at GRHS Convention (continued from page 3)

the Heritage Review packet. The following people were nominated: Ardella Bennett, Minnesota; George Dorscher, Calgary; Roger Ehrich, Virginia; Gayla Gray, Arizona; Elvira Hoff, South Dakota; Dale Wahl, Washington; and Eli Wise, Kentucky. Again, a random drawing chose the winner and the winner of this year's \$50 award is North Star Chapter member Ardella Bennett.

Each year, GRHS chooses one individual who has contributed to the preservation of our ethnic heritage through translations. North Star Chapter member Jim Gesselle has been the GRHS Heritage Review editor and he's taken on the task of providing some excellent translations which have been published in the Heritage Review. Jim was selected for this year's Joseph S Height Literary Award in appreciation for his preservation of our ethnic heritage through his translations. Thank you, Jim, for all you have done for GRHS and our German Russian heritage.



## The Computer Corner By Duane Stabler, dstabler@bigfoot.com

There continues to be lots of new information and some refreshed older websites that are available. This edition is a mixture of information which I hope you'll find of interest; something for everyone. Enjoy the exploration.

<http://www.behindthename.com> is an interesting site that provides the reader with some history and detail around particular first names. For example Gottlieb breaks down to God's love as the meaning of the name. It's of German origin. This site is fun to explore and you are sure to learn a few things.

<http://www.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/fraktur.htm> is of use if you've got that obituary but don't recognize the characters. This is a Fraktur chart that might be good to have handy next time you are in need of some assistance.

There was strong anti-German or Japanese attitude during the wars. It was a very serious problem for those living in those days, especially during WWI. In 1918, the "Alien Enemy Act" was signed and every German who was not a naturalized citizen had to register as an enemy alien. Many of the Germans from Russia came in the late 1800s and early 1900s and had not completed their citizenship papers. They were not rounded up but they had to register as an enemy alien.

These "Enemy Alien Registration Affidavits" are now becoming available online. On the NAURU site, [www.archives.gov/research/arch/topics/aliens.html](http://www.archives.gov/research/arch/topics/aliens.html), if the individual's record comes up, it will show data on the person and how you can obtain the entire record. The records contain the current residence, city and the country of origin and birthdates along with other information. They could contain a "Certificate of Arrival" in the United States and copies of other data. It would be worthwhile to check for this data if your parents hadn't become citizens by 1918.

I'm always looking for military records since my dad was a WWII veteran.

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html> is a site I used this summer to inquire about him since I have no documented information. The sites lead me to some detail including the name of the ship where he was hospitalized after getting wounded. I wasn't so lucky with further information but others might find more.

[http://maxpages.com/poland/Military\\_Records\\_Europe](http://maxpages.com/poland/Military_Records_Europe) covers eastern European records and also German records. Be advised you are in for a ride; the folks with the best records are the French, the worst 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)

[http://nationalatlas.gov/articles/boundaries/a\\_plss.html](http://nationalatlas.gov/articles/boundaries/a_plss.html) is a site dedicated to surveying our country. This is a rather remarkable topic when one realizes how it worked, the instruments used to survey the country and how all of this was done. It's a fun topic that might be a bit technical but will certainly make you think.

(continued on page 7)



## **The Computer Corner** (continued from page 6)

The Plautdietsch on-line dictionary from the Mennonites, provides a way to type in the English word and see it in Plautdietsch. Also, if you know the Plautdietsch word, type it in and see the English word. Don't think that your family didn't use similar words because many of our GR words are on this database. <http://www.mennolink.org/cgi-bin/dictcgi>.

Ships records revisited: If your family came through New York before Ellis Island opened (January 1, 1892), you may want to check the Castle Garden database at <http://castlegarden.org>. There's a better portal for the Castle Garden (and Ellis Island) records at <http://stevemorse.org>.

Number 23, August, 2006. Republication of this article requires prior approval from the author. This and previous Computer Corner articles can be found at [www.northstarchaper.org](http://www.northstarchaper.org) as part of the Articles portion of the website.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **2006 GRHS Convention in Portland, Oregon** (continued from page 4)

Over 600 people were registered. Present were western states attendees we never see at North or South Dakota conventions. Visiting with them, one sensed excitement and interest in coming to another convention. Absent were many familiar faces and friends we've looked forward to meeting from year to year at past Midwest conventions. North Star members Bernie and Roy Becker, Marilyn Brink, Paul Oberlander, Ron Scherbenski, and Duane Stabler attended the history-making convention.

You had to pick and choose carefully when it came to workshops. Not one was a repeat. However, each was filmed, and is available on DVD disks—four workshops or events to a disk. You can order one custom-made disk containing four workshops you want for \$10.00, or you can order the complete convention for \$100.

Contacts and fellowship are main attractions at these conventions. The first evening, while visiting with a GROW gentleman, we discovered that his step-grandmother had been my maternal grandfather's sister. During Thursday evening's dinner we sat at tables for our villages. At our table, one lady had a portrait of one of my paternal great-aunts and promised to e-mail it to me. It was on my computer when I returned home. Another was connected to my maternal background, and I was able to send her an address she did not have.

Entertainment is always a convention highlight. Art Flegel again entertained us with his own rendition of "Old Man Volga" to the tune of "Old Man River." We enjoyed Vienna Opera star Johanna Oh, The Janzen Family Ensemble (piano, violin, harp, guitars), Emter Family Accordion players, the 65-member Liedertafel Harmonie Choir, and the Polkabeat Dance band. With the exception of Johanna Oh, all were GRHS members.

Next year we'll be back at Bismarck July 19-22. If you want to plan ahead, the combined AHSGR/GRHS Convention will be at Casper, Wyoming, July 31-August 3, 2008.

American Historical Society  
Of Germans From Russia  
**North Star Chapter  
of Minnesota**

Non-Profit Organization  
P.O. Box 583642  
Minneapolis, MN 55458

Non-Profit Org  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Minneapolis, MN  
Permit No. 18513

Return Service Requested

## 2006 Membership Form

New \_\_\_\_\_ Renew \_\_\_\_\_ Individual \_\_\_\_\_ Family \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Local dues are \$12 per year per family, plus membership in 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 checks payable to North Star Chapter and submit to: Jorgiann Waltner, 4413 Zenith Ave N., Robbinsdale, MN 55422 Questions contact Jorgiann at 763-533-4090.