

North Star Chapter

November 2007

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

Volume 32 Number 4

A Field Trip to the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC)

Saturday, November 10, 2007, 1:00—3:30 PM

222 21st Avenue So., Minneapolis, MN

**Located in the Elmer L. Anderson Library on the campus of the University of Minnesota
(Next to Walter F. Mondale and Willey Halls)**

The day will begin with an introduction to IHRC and its history with IHRC director Donna Gabaccia, followed by a tour of IHRC caverns with a member of the staff. We will then enjoy a primary source exercise with documents from the IHRC Collections and wrap up the day with a question/answer session.

If you are interested in carpooling, contact Lil Ward by November 3 at 763-784-8626 or lilward@comcast.net. Read more about the IHRC and find map and parking info at www.ihrc.umn.edu.

Directions: From westbound I-94, take the Riverside Ave exit, after crossing the Mississippi River, and turn right on Riverside Ave. Turn right on 19th Ave. and go over Washington Ave. From eastbound I-94, take I-35W north after the Lowry Hill Tunnel. Take the U of M West Bank exit, #17C. Turn right on Washington Ave. Go one block to the traffic light and turn left to continue on Washington Ave. From northbound I-35W, see above. From southbound I-35W, take the Washington Ave exit, #17C. Turn left on Washington Ave and cross over the highway. At the traffic light near the Holiday Inn, turn left to continue on Washington Ave.

Ho, Ho, Ho...To Weihnachtsfest We Go!

Saturday, December 1, 2007, 12:00—4:00

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

The North Star Chapter once again welcomes the holiday season celebrating the foods of our ethnic heritage. We'll gather to enjoy a potluck meal at noon. Bring the entire family, especially the children.

There is limited space for heating items, so we encourage the use of crock pots or electric skillets. Plates, silverware, cups, and beverages will be supplied.

Bring your favorite Christmas verses or stories and plan to share with the group. We may sing a song or two and have a "visitor" bringing goodies for all. Plan to attend, and bring your families and food to share. If you could help before the event setting up, or stay afterwards to help clean and put away items, please contact Lil Ward at 763-784-8626 or lilward@comcast.net.

Because It's the Right Thing

By Jim Gessele

It's the season when chapter leaders unfurl the old flag of volunteerism to see who will salute. The process weighs particularly heavy this year because we are losing so many committee stalwarts. In addition, we need to fill five elective posts. Rule number one in recruiting help to fill committee and officer vacancies is not to sit around awaiting offers of help. Let this writing serve as my most direct and unequivocal plea to lend your hand in running the chapter. Though admonishing everyone, I direct this in particular to a few veteran sideliners who have run out of excuses. I am totally prepared to cope with too much success in this request.

What motivates a volunteer? Here is a list for you to consider: 1) altruism—concern for welfare of others; 2) quality of life—doing service makes ones own life better; 3) giving back; 4) sense of duty; 5) conviction—belief that your heritage has a rightful place in society; 6) social—meeting different people. Certainly, you must be able to identify with at least one of these, or you would not have joined this chapter.

As of this writing, the nominating committee has encountered a lot of negative replies. Please respond positively to the committee when it calls on you to serve. Better yet, call them. Contacts are Duane Stabler (952-447-8654), Gwen Cowherd (651-426-0117) and Lil Ward (763-784-8626). For volunteer committee work, contact me at 612-333-0218.

Anticipating success in recruiting officer candidates and for the purpose of elections, a five-minute business meeting will convene at the Weihnachtsfest December 1.

Please Take Note

If you will be spending the winter somewhere else, please give Ardella Bennett, Newsletter Production Manager, your temporary address. The post office will not forward the newsletter, so it is returned to us, which wastes the mailing fee, and deprives you of your newsletter. Please help us save money by taking a moment to let Ardella know where you'll be and how long you'll be there, and she'll make sure your newsletter gets to you.

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Upcoming Event:

Saturday, January 12, 2008, 1:00 PM, Berea Lutheran Church

"Carl Rivinius vs. John Fast: A Claim Contest Overshadowed by Machine Politics," Presented by Jim Gessele

While researching hometown county newspapers for a recent writing project, Jim Gessele unearthed an intriguing 1906 account of an immigrant farmer's pending loss of homestead through procedural contest. Digging deeper, he discovered the contest was only one facet of a larger storm to hit McLean County, North Dakota, in a year the state put its newly enacted local primary election law to the test. Learn about Alexander McKenzie's machine politics death grip on the North Dakota scene and the insurgency that arose against bossism, as well as how German-Russians were both players and pawns in the battle, and were not quite as apolitical as we have assumed.

Member News

The North Star Chapter welcomes new members Janice Becker Hunter of Waseca, Donna Pauley of Minneapolis, Diann and Paul Bennin of Bloomington, and Bernadine Lang and Roger Kuhn of Owatonna.

Mayo Flegel was elected President of the Board of Trustees of the AHSGR Foundation for 2007-2008.

Our condolences to Sam Brungardt on the death of his aunt and godmother, Ann Louise Anderson Herman, 90, of Hays, KS. Ann is preceded in death by her husband Wendelin, son James, and daughter Patricia. She is survived by her son John, daughter Barbara King, and six grandchildren.

Big thanks to Harvest "Kerb" Fest organizers Shona Dockter, Carol Just, and Lil Ward, kitchen coordinators Sam Brungardt and Jim Gessele, and the 40 volunteers and demonstrators who made the event such a huge success.

Contests Abound

Take note of the special inserts accompanying this issue of the newsletter. They pertain to contests underway on both chapter and national society levels and engage youth in the endeavor to preserve our German-Russian heritage. They sweeten the deal with cash awards.

You will find a two-page insert promoting AHSGR's Annual Storytelling Contest, including contest rules and an entry form. This particular competition has both youth and adult divisions.

The North Star Chapter is sponsoring its own Youth Essay Contest, and a brochure gives all the details. Chapter contest winners will receive prizes. All local entries will be entered in the International GRHS writing contest.

Another contest comes to mind: the 4th Annual AHSGR Membership Campaign. This "UP, UP AND AWAY" effort got underway at the 2007 national convention in Hays, Kansas, and ends July 15, 2008. Three cash prizes will be awarded at the 2008 Casper Convention July 28–August 3 to the AHSGR members who recruit the highest number of new members. You will find application forms online at <http://www.ahsgr.org>.

Best of luck to all entrants. In the end, all of us will be winners!

The Autumn Leaf

By Gwen Schock Cowherd

On a recent trip to the small South Dakota town where I grew up, I visited the library where I discovered several decrepit cardboard boxes of scrapbooks dating back to the 1920's. Upon inquiry, the librarian told me that they were donated by the family of the deceased owner. I became so enthralled with the scrapbooks that I found myself eagerly visiting the library every day during my two-week visit.

As I turned page after page of dusty, brown, brittle paper, I inhaled not only old mold but years of history crudely cut from the town's weekly newspaper. The community's history unfolded before me – graduation classes, weddings, engagements, obituaries and other important news articles. I surprisingly happened upon a picture of myself with fellow 4-H members taken over 50 years ago.

I began to wonder about the scrapbooker. What did she look like? What were her likes and dislikes? Did she know she was a historian? Among the pages were tucked club programs, party favors, remnants of dried corsages, ribbons and other items she deemed extra special. I was beginning to know her. I had hints. She was married, had a family, busy and active in the community. I liked her.

There it was—inside a large yellowed envelope, ironed between two wrinkled deteriorating sheets of waxed paper inscribed with her name and the date October 1947 in faded blue ink—a moldy decayed leaf. To take the time to select what she deemed the perfect leaf and try and preserve its beauty was numbing knowing what a busy person she was. But, also being a lover of autumn leaves, I understood. Of all the special time capsules carefully selected for her scrapbooks, to see that an autumn leaf gained entry tells a story of the timeless enchantment generations have had with fall

and its magic.

Now, whenever Mother Nature orchestrates her annual show and turns millions of trees into spellbinding beauty, I think of only one leaf—the decayed leaf in the old musty scrapbook, selected for preservation not with modern acid-free products touted by modern-day archivists, but with the best known product of the time—waxed paper.

2008 Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee will present the following slate to the membership for vote at the December meeting:

President: Duane Stabler
Programming: Lil Ward
Treasurer: Pat Current
Membership: Helen Kleingartner
Secretary: OPEN

If anyone would like to be considered for any of the above positions, please notify nominating committee member Gwen Schock Cowherd at 651-426-0117 or gwensc@peoplepc.com. The open secretary position is a great way to become mentored into service as a chapter officer and we encourage your participation.

The Chapter provides many volunteer opportunities. If you are interested in being mentored on any of the following committees, notify Gwen and she will refer your name to the 2008 Board.

Refreshments: Make coffee, buy serving supplies, purchase & serve treats for monthly meetings.

Web Site: Maintain the North Star Chapter website.

Sunshine: Send out greeting cards when notified.

Publicity: Send out emails and postal mailings at the request of the Board.

Phone Calling: Remind/invite members via phone of special functions. Call and gather specific information at the request of the Board.

Historian: Scrapbook and file meeting memorabilia and newsletters.

Youth: Promote youth events within the chapter such as the Youth Essay Contest.

Kerb Fest is a Smashing Success

After a six-year hiatus, the North Star Chapter of Germans from Russia hosted their legendary Harvest “Kerb” Festival on October 13 at Berea Lutheran Church in Richfield.

Over 200 guests learned about and sampled locally grown *Schwartzbeeren*, a type of nightshade berry native to Volga German-Russian families who settled in Kansas. They were also treated to demonstrations and samples of *Kaese Knepfle* (cheese buttons), *Kuechle* (a type of fry-bread), sauerkraut and German sausage, and learned about harness repair and the delicate art of tatting.

A menu of sausage, sauerkraut, creamed potatoes with dumplings, home-baked bread, dill, cucumber, watermelon and beet pickles, and custard *Kuchen* gave attendees a German-Russian comfort food experience inspiring *Maistub* and *Freundshaft* that is the hallmark of North Star events. Throw in good accordion music and singing and, as they say in the local news, “a good time was had by all.” For photos of this event go to www.northstarchapter.org.

This Harvest “Kerb” Festival could not have happened without the collaborative effort of more than 40 volunteer members of the North Star Chapter. It takes months of planning, but the true gift to all is the sense of community that evolves when we work together. Our emigrant ancestors were smiling down on us while we inspired and educated others about the unique folk and food ways of the Germans from Russia.

“Kerb” (derivation from *Kirchweih*) is rooted in ancient German culture and originally celebrated a consecration of the church each autumn. It carried over to the German colonies in Russia and evolved into a secular event, including a fair and musical entertainment.

Bits & Pieces

By Cynthia Miller

Have you ever wondered how many people in the United States share your name? Check out www.howmanyofme.com to find out. The site uses census info to calculate how many Americans have the same first name, last name, and both. For instance, there are over 3,000 people named Cynthia Miller.

Many of us know the childhood rhyme that begins “Monday’s child is fair of face.” Do you know what day of the week you were born on? A parenting website has an easy calculator to find out:

www.eparenting.co.uk/funstuff/whatday.shtml. This is a fun addition to family trees and history books.

If you’re trying to interest your grandchildren in their German-Russian heritage, tell them that they could be related to an American Idol! The 2007 winner of the world-famous television singing competition was 17-year-old Jordin Sparks from Arizona. Her maternal great-grandparents, Leah and Otto Wiedmann, came from German-Russian immigrant families in North Dakota. Jordin joins other famous German-Russian musicians Lawrence Welk and John Denver, letting the world know just how talented we are.

Also, with Christmas approaching, consider giving a national membership as a gift to a younger adult family member. My grandmother started doing this for me when I was in college, even though it was years before I really took interest and participated in organization activities. You may not see immediate results, but it’s a gift that can have long-reaching implications.

**North Star Chapter
of Minnesota-AHSGR and GRHS**
Non-Profit Organization
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2008 Membership Form

☐ New ☐ Renew ☐ Individual ☐ Family

Name(s) _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip+4 _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Please note that a membership directory might be provided to North Star Chapter members that would include your name, address, phone, and email. If the chapter chooses to publish a membership directory:

☐ I **agree** to have my name, address, phone and email in the published directory.
☐ Please **exclude** my information from the published directory.

National Membership: ☐ AHSGR ☐ GRHS ☐ Both AHSGR and GRHS
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 submit to: Jorgiann Waltner, 4413 Zenith Avenue N, Robbinsdale MN 55422-1445 Questions: Contact Jorgiann at 763-533-4090

For newsletter greeting only: Birthday Month(s) _____ Wedding Anniversary Month _____