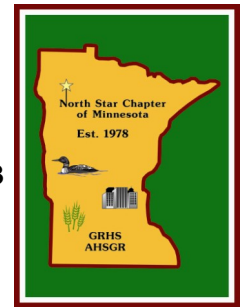


# North Star Chapter

September 2010

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

Volume 35 Number 3



## Lunch Social

**Saturday, September 18, 2010, 11:30 AM**

**Glockenspiel Restaurant, 605 7th St. W, St. Paul, MN**

We will celebrate our return to our active program year with a popular event: lunch together at the German restaurant Glockenspiel near downtown St. Paul. We will order off the menu and everyone is responsible for the cost of their own meal. To reserve your spot, please contact Marilyn Brink by Saturday, September 11, at 763-521-2673 or [zumblebump@yahoo.com](mailto:zumblebump@yahoo.com). Directions and menu information can be found at [www.glockenspielrestaurant.com](http://www.glockenspielrestaurant.com). Plan to reunite with your North Star Chapter friends at our September gathering.

## The Volga Relief Society

**Saturday, October 16, 2010, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

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

In October we welcome Dr. Brent Mai, director of the Center for Volga German Studies at Concordia University, who will speak on the Volga Relief Society.

After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the ethnic German colonists in the Volga region were forced to give up their seed wheat. When the Germans resisted the forced requisition, they were stripped of all grain and mass executions were carried out. Then in 1920 and 1921, total crop failures occurred and one of the greatest famines in years set in. In the German colonies of Samara and Saratov provinces, an estimated 170,000 men, women, and children died of starvation. Family and friends in the United States received letters from Russia describing the terrible conditions. As a result, relief societies were organized in many states in which Volga Germans had settled.

In Portland, Oregon, the Volga Relief Society was organized through the leadership of John Miller and George Repp, who led the effort to collect funds and donations to help their starving countrymen in Russia. Another organization with similar goals, the Central States Volga Relief Society, arose at the same time in Lincoln, Nebraska. In 1922, the two organizations merged to form the American Volga Relief Society (AVRS). The AVRS operated through

**(Volga Relief Society, continued on page 6)**

## President's Message

By Lil Ward

Welcome back. It's hard to believe it is already fall but what a line-up of programs we have for you for our Chapter meetings. They are listed in the newsletter so mark them on your calendar and join us. As has become our tradition, to kick off the new year for us we will have lunch at the Glockenspiel Restaurant in St. Paul then back to Berea Lutheran Church for our regular meetings.

The GRHS convention held in Bismarck was my first convention and I must say I enjoyed it very much. The speakers, the library usage, the ma-istube, oh, and don't forget the kuchen every afternoon! We had 15 chapter members attending and we displayed our banner with pride. I was not able to attend the AHSGR convention but I'm sure that was also a great event.

Again, welcome back. I will not be at the Glockenspiel in September as we will be touring Switzerland but I look forward to seeing you all in October.

## Happy Birthday

September: Janet Flegel, Elvera Hofmann, Albert Pfeifle, Marv Presler, Arnie Zimmerman

October: Roy Becker, Lucille Elrite, Mayo Flegel, Marv Geske, Helen Kleingartner

## Happy Anniversary

September: Mildred & Elmer Deutschmann, Marlene & Chris Huber

October: Pat & Ray Current, Bernadine & Roger Kuhn, Cindy Miller & Sean Beaton, Marlene Walth

## North Star Chapter 2010 Officers

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## Library Corner

By Bernie Becker

Have you searched in vain for information on your ancestors' villages in South Russia—when founded, how many residents, etc.? What did your great- or great-great-grandparents use for currency; what was their system of measure? Would you like a timeline of Russia's involvement in wars beginning with 1700 up to 2000, or a timeline of laws passed that affected your relatives? That's just a teaser of much, much more information you'll find when you turn the pages of "German-Russian Handbook, A Reference Book for Russian German and German Russian History and Culture – With Place Name Listings of Former German Settlement Areas" by Ulrich Mertens.

Brigitte von Budde and Alex Herzog translated the book from German. Allyn Brosz, Alex Herzog, and Thomas Stangl did the editing, and the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, NDSU Libraries in Fargo published it. This book was recommended by several of our members. Look for this "hot off the press," 799-page book at our October meeting. If you consider Stumpp's book your genealogical bible, this book can be placed alongside it in importance.

To appreciate its content, I advise you settle down and study pages vii thru xii to understand why and how it came about. Then turn through the next several pages where you'll find the abbreviations used throughout the book. The Table of Contents is page iii. There is no index at back of the book. This book will not be available to check out. To appreciate the valuable content of this book you will want to spend a good chunk library time getting acquainted with it the first time

you have opportunity to peruse it.

If you're looking for a lighter read, "Waiting for Otto" by Ron Rude will be your pick. This is a work of fiction – BUT – the two main character's names, as well as some events and some locations are drawn from an actual family's sketchy written and oral history. In the early 1900s on the North Dakota prairies, young Selma Retzlaff Wollerman begins her 101-year life, years including marriage, widowhood, a large family, the Great Depression, murder, cruel neighbors, and WW II. With skill, humor and toughness, she survives. It was well written, I couldn't put it down.

Another page-turner and tearjerker book purchased at the convention is "Anton, A Young Boy, His Friend & the Russian Revolution" by Dale Eisler. "A compelling story worth telling – powerful, absorbing reading" wrote Steven Hayward. I agree. Two little boys ages five through ten tell the story of their families during the Russian Revolution. Friendship endures despite many barriers. If you like your emotions stirred while reading, you won't want to miss this book.

If you like to pick up a book and read a few pages or a chapter at a time, than Alfred Opp's book, "Our Roots Grew Deep In the Russen Soil" is for you. In Alfred Opp's simple, forthright style he describes various aspects of personal life in Teplitz, South Russia. You travel with him on their journey to Poland and then to Germany when they are uprooted 1940. Finally you move to Canada where they find peace and freedom. The back cover states, "It is a frank recounting of the effects of WWII on the lives of everyday people caught in the war. It is a story of fortitude, courage and triumph."

"Women of the Northern Plains" by Barbara

**(Library Corner, continued on page 5)**

## 2010 GRHS Bismarck Convention Highlights

By Bernie Becker

We would rather have fun and games all way through the convention, but the Business Meeting, too, can be interesting and worthwhile. Our own Duane Stabler was elected to another term on the Board of Directors. He had chosen not to run, but a nomination from the floor brought him to the front where he made an impassioned plea for the need for members to serve in various ways. Ted Becker spoke for the Foundation (HFGR). He made us aware of the vital importance for our tax-deductible donations to HFGR. Our GRHS dues do not begin to pay all the operational costs of the organization. The foundation steps in and helps with various needs. Val Wangler asked for cash donations to help pay for the new sign. He also stressed the need for extra funds for the building; for example, the five mercury bulbs on the outside of the building cost \$30 each when they need to be replaced. In plain words – donations are needed and welcome.

Fourteen North Star members came across one another at the dinner table, in workshops, eating kuchen, or in the library. I asked several of our attendees for their impressions of the convention. Gloriann Andersen loved “being surrounded by the beautiful sound of enthusiastic voices singing German songs and hymns at the Sing-a-Long in the hotel courtyard.” She added, “I loved taking part and enjoying the humor that evolved in the ‘Pastimes and Entertainment of the Germans from Russia’ workshop in which we recalled games we played and things we did in the leisure time of our earlier days.”

Ron Scherbenske took in Homer Rudolf’s workshop “Land Regulations in the German-

Russian Colonies.” “I was impressed by how welfare of the family and the elderly was considered in the transfer of property from one generation to the next.” Another workshop I enjoyed was ‘The Mystery of the Wolf Family Murders’ by Vern Keel, which was well done. I have since read his novel on the subject and got a good feel for what life was like on a North Dakota farm circa 1920.”

Lil Ward enjoyed several workshops. “Val Wangler’s presentation ‘The Art of Making Hochzeit Schnapps (Red Eye)’ had standing room only. I missed the making of the schnapps but came in on the last half when he passed out samples.” How were you able to time that just right, Lil? She added: “Lucy Simpson’s ‘Organizing and Creating a Genealogy Treasure Book’ was full of great ideas of organizing and putting together a book on each family.”

When I asked Diane Reed for her impressions, she readily quipped, “You mean there’s anything beyond kuchen?” But then she got serious and told me how impressed she was with the keynote speaker, Al Neuharth, founder of USA Today newspaper. “Considering his humble beginning,” she said, “I think what he has done with his life and how he has stayed true to his beliefs, not forgetting from whence he came, and adopting a multi-racial family all were truly commendable.”

Marvin Lang couldn’t say enough about the wonderful accommodations, and the reasonably-priced good and efficiently-served plentiful food. Marvin said he goes crazy in the wonderful library and gave high praise to Rachel and her helpers for the superb job they do.

The Youth Essay contest continues to grow. This year 170 entries were received, including eight PowerPoint or CD presentations.

## Member News

Our condolences to John and Gayle Hafner and family on the passing of John's mother, longtime chapter member Margaret Hafner. Margaret was born in Wisconsin and married her husband, the Rev. Herbert Hafner, in 1941. They lived in Canada for several years before moving to the Cities. Rev. Hafner founded Berea Lutheran Church in Richfield, where the North Star Chapter has been holding meetings for several years. The Hafners also served a church in Michigan before retiring back in the Cities. Margaret was a teacher, active traveler, and avid reader. She passed away in July, shortly after her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is survived by four children, nine grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

Our condolences to Robert Suppan and family on the passing of his wife, longtime chapter member Martha Suppan. Marty passed away in June, just before her 89<sup>th</sup> birthday. She and Robert were married for 60 years, and she is survived by her husband, four children, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Our condolences to Carol Just and family on the passing of her mother, Helen Just. Helen was born in 1919 in McIntosh County, North Dakota, married husband Julius in 1939, and raised their children on a farm in LaMoure County. She loved gardening, travel, and visiting with her family. She is survived by five children and more than 20 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

## Upcoming Events

Saturday, November 20, 2010 – Nancy Gertner & Cynthia Miller: Genealogy & Social Networking

Saturday, December 4, 2010 – Weihnachtsfest

(**Library Corner**, continued from on page 3)

Handy-Marchello is a more academic study of pioneer farmwomen. The author compares the challenges of the harsh environment of the northern plains that differed from pioneers in other areas. All hands were needed when the crop was ready for harvest. The farm and land were everything, sometimes to the neglect of their children. Women's value to the farm, to the family, and their contribution to community were seldom recognized. Their funds from selling eggs and cream often kept the family from starvation. Their need for communication developed the "Ladies' Aids" and encouraged church development.

"Hide Me Within Thy Wounds: The Persecution of the Catholic Church in the USSR" is yet another book about the Russian Revolution and its horrors. The book "Anton" above gives just one account of what this book is in total. We need to read stories such as these to appreciate the freedoms we enjoy in the USA.



**North Star Chapter members at the GRHS Convention**

## Genealogy: Everyone's Doing It!

By Cynthia Miller

Hobbies, like fads, seem to come and go. Genealogy, while always being a popular American pastime, is enjoying new popularity and participation in the past few years. Last winter, PBS had a success with its four-part series "Faces of America," which featured eight well-known Americans, including North Dakota native and Minnesota resident Louise Erdrich, exploring and telling the stories of their families. In the spring, NBC had great ratings with their series "Who Do You Think You Are," which also followed celebrities, such as actress Susan Sarandon, on their quest to discover family history. The series was such a hit that it will be back on the air with new episodes this fall (you can watch past episodes for free at [www.hulu.com](http://www.hulu.com)).

I get jealous watching these shows because I would love to have access to the professional researchers that these celebrities enjoyed. Not only did they have expert genealogists guiding their searches (along with expensive DNA tests to identify conclusively some of their bloodlines), but they had historians who could put their ancestors' experiences into the context of the greater history of America. They were also able to travel across America and overseas to view the places their ancestors had been. My dream is to not only someday see my grandfather's birthplace in Crimea, but to see the small village outside Zurich where I recently discovered the origins of one line of my family, in addition to the small Scottish island that sent out my husband's great-great-grandfather to Canada and then America.

But on my budget, I'll have to be low-key for a while. Luckily the resources are better than ever for the amateur genealogist. It's all about the internet now; if you've never tried

getting online, researching family history is a great reason to start. The September 2010 issue of Family Tree Magazine lists 101 free websites for tracing family roots. I've heard nothing but good things about [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). It does charge a fee, but you can try it for free to see what it contains for you.

October is Family History Month. Anna Dalhaimer Bartkowski, an active member of the Arizona Sun Chapter as well as a writer and genealogist, writes about family history on her blog Value Meals on the Volga. Three years ago, she celebrated the month by offering a tip every day on how families can study and celebrate their history. The link [http://valuemeals.blogspot.com/2007\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://valuemeals.blogspot.com/2007_10_01_archive.html) takes you to the last tip of the month. Read down to get the other 30. Anna provides fun and varied ideas that family members of all ages can enjoy, and links to other interesting websites. Don't get left behind...join the crowd on the genealogy journey.

**Volga Relief Society**, continued from page 1)

the American Relief Administration, headed by Herbert Hoover.

Join us to explore this fascinating piece of German-Russian history, one many of your ancestors possibly participated in.

# Please Take Note

If you have an idea for an article, but don't like to write, please contact newsletter editor Cynthia Miller and she can write it for you. Her parents will be glad that the journalism degree they paid for is going to good use! Also, if you have a genealogy question or inquiry, send that as well. We have Germans from Russia around the country (if not the world) who read our newsletter, and someone might be able to help.

If you are planning a trip to Washington DC, you may want to check out the new German American Heritage Museum, which just opened this past March. The GAH Museum features permanent exhibits on German immigration and migration in America and famous German-Americans, as well as presenting lectures and conferences. Will Germans from Russia be mentioned? The first person to visit will have to tell us! For more information, visit the website at [www.gahfusa.org](http://www.gahfusa.org).

## Over 20,000 Sold! To Order More *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. *Sei Unser Gast* cookbooks are sold at some North Star Chapter meetings. To order by mail, complete the form below and mail it with a check payable to "North Star Chapter" (payable in U.S. dollars) and mail to: Cookbook Orders, North Star Chapter of Minnesota, P.O. Box 583642, Minneapolis, MN 55458-3642. Additional order forms can be printed from our website: [www.northstarchapter.org](http://www.northstarchapter.org)

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## 2010 Membership Form

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**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 \$12.**

**GRHS requests that you send your national membership (\$50) to GRHS, 1125 W. Turnpike Ave., Bismarck ND 58501.**

**Please make your check payable to North Star Chapter and submit to:  
Ardella Bennett, 175 Spring Valley Dr., Bloomington MN 55420**

**Questions: Contact Ardella at 952-884-4211 or [ardellabennett@msn.com](mailto:ardellabennett@msn.com)**

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