

North Star Chapter

<http://www.northstarchapter.org>

Preserving the heritage of the Germans from Russia, in dual affiliation with the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR) and the Germans from Russia Historical Society (GRHS).

"At Home in Russia, at Home on the Prairie"

**Saturday,
January 26, 2013,
Berea Lutheran Church,
7538 Emerson Avenue S.,
Richfield, MN 55423**

1:00 - Business meeting

1:45 - Refreshments

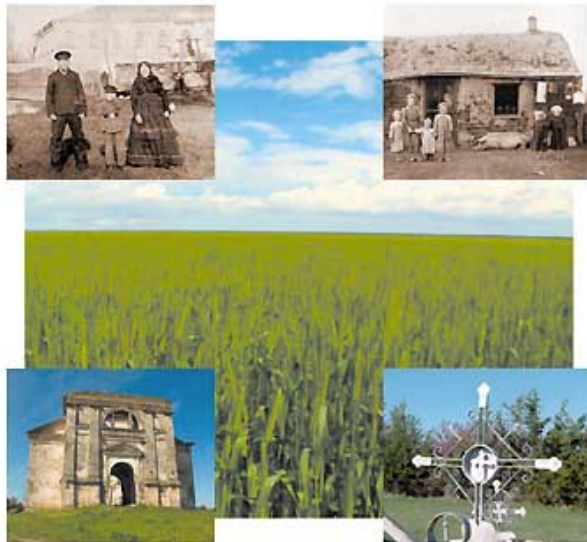
2:00 – Documentary viewing

This documentary places one's own family story in a wider human narrative of what it means to be a German from Russia today. The documentary serves as an audible and visual museum of one emotional and intellectual place, the **Kutschurgan Valley in Russia**, as the intersection of memory and place, a foundation of many shared and common memories for those of us in the Northern Plains and western Canadian prairie provinces.

A river flows gently into its broad lagoon, its banks punctuated by once German villages, dazzling fields of grain, abundant vineyards, fruit trees and gardens. The land is fertile. The area is typical of many German settlements that once made these

Russian steppes a breadbasket of grain and other agricultural products. The Germans who settled the area are largely gone now, scattered in a diaspora of forced migration through difficult decades of political unrest and change. And though the region no longer exists as when the Germans lived there, it endures in the minds of the people, lingering fragilely "*Da haam in Russland*," "Back home in Russia."

At Home in Russia, at Home on the Prairie



Prairie
Public
Productions

One-hour DVD documentary produced by Prairie Public Broadcasting, Fargo, North Dakota, copyright 2012.



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Please Take Note **Snowbirds:**

If you have a winter address, please notify the Membership Chair, Chuck Kurle, or assistant Vicki Kurle, or Newsletter mailer Nancy Gertner.

Chapter Librarian Bernie Becker checks out chapter library materials to chapter members at upcoming meetings in January, and February.

Thank you Librarian Bernie, and to chapter members Marilyn Brink and Patsy Ramberg for assisting with the library..

Chapter Members: Please remember to return your reading materials to the library!

LIBRARY CORNER

Book Review

***Collectivization the the Soviet Union
German Letters to America, 1927-1932
Gluckstal Colonies Research
Association***

Author: Janice Huber Stangl

by Patsy Ramberg

My grandfather, John Graf, Jr, often sat in his Streeter ND home and read the Dakota Free Press, a black cloud of smoke rising behind the paper as he smoked his imported Turkish tobacco.

I was only a preschooler then, but I knew what he was reading was a German language paper telling him about what was going on in far away Russia where he was born. I couldn't even read English yet, but I wondered what stories he was learning of.

All these years later, Jan Stangl's book of translated letters lets me in on the news from Neudorf, Marienberg, and other Gluckstal colonies. With the help of Alex Herzog, Homer Rudolph, Jim Gessele, and many others, these translated letters show us snippets of town life, births, weddings, deaths, and most importantly, the coming of the mass arrests, exile, and/or executions of our relatives who stayed behind when our relatives came to America.

(Continued on Page 6.)

FEBRUARY GENEALOGY WORKSHOP FEATURES LIBRARY RESEARCH TIME AND SPEAKER

“A Visit to Crimea”

Saturday, February 16, 2013

10:00 am - 1:00 pm - Library Research Time

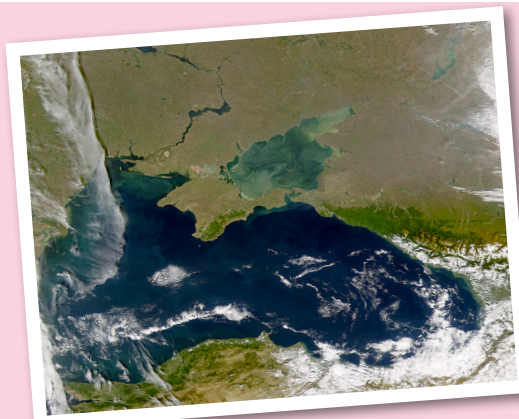
1:00 - 3:00 pm - Meeting & Speaker

Berea Lutheran Church, 7538 Emerson Avenue S,
Richfield MN 55423

1:00: Short business meeting

1:45: Refreshments

2:00: A Visit to Crimea with Matt Klee



Many Germans from Russia dream of visiting the homeland their ancestors left. North Star member Matt Klee visited the Ukraine in 2012, where his father was born, and will share his experience and photos. Matt has also recently published a book with Merv Weiss entitled *“Crimean Catholic Records Obtained from the Russian State Archives in Saratov,”* and he will explain what he found and how the information can be used.

Matt is originally from Halliday, North Dakota. He attended North Dakota State University and the University of Virginia. He worked for over 35 years as an engineer at the Prairie Island Nuclear Plant, and is now semi-retired so he can spend more time on genealogy, which he has pursued for 15 years.



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FEBRUARY GENEALOGY WORKSHOP FEATURES LIBRARY RESEARCH TIME SATURDAY MORNING, 10AM - 1PM

The North Star Chapter's February meeting provides time to use library materials and collaborate with other researchers. Feel free to bring a sack lunch to eat before our meeting begins!

Please remember to return library materials checked out in 2012!

ANNUAL HOLIDAY EVENT FEATURED FOOD, FELLOWSHIP, SANTA AND STORIES

North Star Chapter's 34th Annual Weihnachtsfest

held Saturday, December 1, 2012

The annual **Weihnachtsfest** delivered great food, music, storytelling, and a visit from a jolly soul in a red suit. Steve Weninger, accordionist extraordinaire performed his musical magic, entertaining us and leading traditional holiday songs. The potluck event

featured ethnic foods enjoyed by multiple generations.



Storyteller Patsy Ramberg shared the story of "Frost," a Russian folk tale, complete with Nasty Mother and Bad Sisters. ***Thank you to all the chapter members that helped setup, decorate, and clean up for this special annual event!***

Chapter President's Message

by Ron Scherbenski

The winter season has arrived in Minnesota! I am writing this on Monday 10 Dec and we have just had sixteen inches of snow. At least most of us don't have livestock to be concerned about.

The North Star Chapter has had another good year. Our membership is up a little and most of that is due to the good programming we have had this year. I think the high point of the year was the visit by Dr. Ute Schmidt in July. Carol Just and Nancy Gertner have done an excellent job planning programs and we owe them a big Danke Schoen!

At the November business meeting, we made a change in our officers for the upcoming year. Carol Just has stepped down as co-chair of programming and Cindy Miller will be doing programming for the coming year. Nancy Gertner

has agreed to take care of the newsletter replacing Cindy Miller. The rest of the roster is unchanged for the coming year with Chuck & Vickie Kurle doing Membership, Jerry Rener at Secretary, Marilyn Brink as the Treasurer and myself as President. We also became aware of the fact that we are spending more per member then we are taking in so to avoid any "fiscal cliff" we have increased the dues from \$12/year to \$15/year. Still a very good return on investment when you consider what you get for just \$15. At the January business meeting we will be going over the budget for the upcoming year, so be sure to attend and see how the North Star Chapter balances the books. Maybe we should send a representative to DC to show them how. By the time you get this, Christmas and New Year's Eve will have passed, so I hope you had a good time with family a friends. Have good and prosperous 2013 and I hope to see you all in the New Year.

Upcoming Events:

January 26, 2013

Documentary: *"At Home in Russia, At Home on the Prairie"*

The newest documentary film of the Germans from Russia series produced by Prairie Public TV.

February 16, 2013

Genealogy Research Workshop
Library Research Time, and
Speaker, Matt Klee presents
"A Trip to Crimea"

March 23, 2013

Speaker Carolyn Schott,
author of *"Visiting Your Ancestral Town."*

April 27, 2013

Annual Spring Banquet

Social event with catered meal and speaker. Look for details in next newsletter



SEI UNSER GAST COOKBOOK MAKES A GREAT YEAR-ROUND GIFT

Look for cookbook sales at chapter events for stocking up on gifts.

Our German Russian collection of recipes makes a great gift for bridal showers, weddings, birthdays, and holidays. An order form can be found on page 7.

LIBRARY CORNER

Book Review by Patsy Ramberg (Continued from Page 2)

Most of these letters were written by Jakob Ahl and published primarily in *Der Saats-Anzeiger* (The State Gazette), in Rugby, ND; but also in *Dakota Rundschau* (Dakota Review), in Eureka, SD; and *Dakota Freie Presse* (Dakota Free Press), Aberdeen SD.

These were the years of collectivization in Russia, when, supposedly, everything would be owned in common. Ahl seems to have a pragmatic yet sympathetic reaction to this new order.

Sometimes he sees it as an experiment that requires time to prove or disprove itself; sometimes he sees the poverty it has brought upon the people and pleads for help from American relatives. He is hampered in what he can say by the censorship that prevails, but he does manage to get his licks in against the government's policies. He was arrested once, but the court found him not guilty and he was allowed to go home. He says his detention wasn't so bad.

Stangl's thought of censorship seems slightly off center. Ahl used metaphors, she says, to conceal the hard political and economic times the families were experiencing in order to get the message through the censors. To me the metaphors seemed very obvious, yet, they passed through the censorship. A small complaint indeed for the wonderful stories the letters tell.

He also rails against church goers who often fail in their Christian duty, especially those in America who will not help their poor relatives in Russia. He often lists the money Americans have sent, from one dollar to sizable sums. He is also bewildered that parents aren't baptizing their children. When they die, they are buried with "little ceremony."

He also doesn't understand the Baptists, the 7 Dayers, and other sects. The Russian government liked this fragmentizing of the churches; it formed smaller allegiances which were easier to break up.

Why Gluckstalers would leave the Lutheran church in favor of other sects bewildered Ahl. Of course, I read the book for any hint of my relatives that stayed behind. As usual, I found little. Most of the Grafs immigrated; my grandfather's whole family came over in the 1870s, but here and there was a tad of information.

Konrad and Karoline Graf greeted Theobald and Johann Graf, who lived near Jamestown (Streeter) and inquired as to if they got their letter because these Graf brothers have not responded.

A five year old child of Johann Jakob Graf died in April, 1928. Bells rang at the Reformed Church.

Frederick Graf and Ludwig Schmidt of Streeter each sent a dollar.

Ahl cautions against sending cash, it is often stolen, and never to send money orders because there is no way they can be redeemed.

One piece of information which may or may not be family history regards a Georg Helm of Neudorf. Mention is made of a son, Michael, who came to America. My aunt married a Michael Helm; I can't be sure, but it appears that Georg was his father. Michael was a businessman in Streeter.

It seems that Georg was a kulak and was "sent away" twice, the second time to disappear completely.

Also, in the books on Gluckstahl, two Graf brothers are listed as being arrested and convicted, but no date is given for their execution.

What a terrible time.

Perhaps as you read through the book's pages, you will find hints and stories about your own families.

Thanks, Jan Stangl and your helpers for bringing us this insight into the German colonies in the early 1900s.

These letters make me more grateful than ever that my great-grandparents immigrated. We escaped just by the hair of our chinny-chin, before the houses were blown down forever.



North Star Chapter of Minnesota Cookbook Order Form *Sei Unser Gast*

**Cookbooks may also be purchased at Special Chapter events at:
Berea Lutheran Church, 7538 Emerson Avenue South, Richfield, MN 55423
See chapter schedule of events (Page 4) for upcoming opportunities**

Cookbook Prices

1 to 4 copies: \$12.95 each.

5 to 9 copies: \$11.95 each.

Save! Buy 10 or more Sei Unser Gast cookbooks and pay only \$10.95 each.

Make checks payable to: "North Star Chapter."

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Number of books ordered : _____

Send form with payment to: Cookbook Orders, North Star Chapter of Minnesota,

P.O. Box 583642, Minneapolis, MN 55458-3642.

Postage/Shipping

1 to 4 books: \$2.50 per book (U.S.), \$5.75 (Canada)

5 to 9 books: \$2.00 per book (U.S.), \$4.50 (Canada)

10 or more books: \$1.50 per book (U.S.),
\$4.00 (Canada)

North Star Chapter Book Publishing Proposal

At the November 17, 2012 North Star Chapter meeting, the membership approved funding for a new publication created by members of the North Star Chapter.

The working title will be "Growing Up German Russian," a collection of essays by members of the Minnesota North Star Chapter, Germans from Russia, to include stories, poems, photos and artwork that will provide different aspects of Germans from Russia daily life.

The editorial committee is seeking contributions on the following topics: Immigration/Emigration, Agriculture, Religion, Education, Work, Foodways/Folkways, Interaction with other ethnic groups, and Urban Pioneers. Contributions should be no longer than 4 pages, submitted in Times New Roman font, 12 point.

Submissions should be sent electronically to Carol Just, CarolJjust@gmail.com by April 1, 2013.

Book Committee/Editorial Board:

Sharon Chmielarz – published poet and author of several volumes of poems and children's books

Cynthia Miller – journalism major, publicist and adjunct instructor experience; NStar newsletter editor

Nancy Gertner – North Star newsletter editor/layout designer

Bernie Becker – North Star Librarian and published author

Carol Just – history major, published essayist and blogger on the topic of Germans from Russia

Time to Renew Membership for 2013!

North Star Chapter Membership Form

☐ New ☐ Renew ☐ Individual ☐ Family

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

National Membership: ☐ AHSGR ☐ GRHS ☐ Both

Local dues are \$15 per year per family, plus membership in either AHSGR or GRHS.

AHSGR members please submit \$65 (\$50 for AHSGR, \$15 for North Star).

GRHS members please submit \$15. 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:

Chuck Kurle, 2040 Highland Dr., Hastings MN 55033

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

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