

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).

It's Not Enough to Simply Fill in a Genealogy Chart!

Saturday, November 16, 2019
Berea Lutheran Church

7538 Emerson Ave S
Richfield, MN 55423

November Genealogy Research Day

10:00 a.m. - Library open for research

1:00 p.m. - Business meeting and election of officers

2:00 p.m. Program*

Jim Gessele presents:

**"Lost...and found...in translation:
A personal lesson learned while deciphering German words. It's all about telling our stories."**

It's time to learn it's not enough to simply fill in a genealogy chart. Jim will share excerpts from his latest translation of ***Fierce as a Lioness & Busy as a Bee: In Grandmother's Footsteps*** (anticipated publication early 2020), a book written by Martha Betz, who works as a genealogist at the Bessarabian Heimat Museum in Stuttgart, Germany.



Longtime North Star Chapter member, **Jim Gessele**, currently has five translated works published and in circulation. This book, ***Fierce as a Lioness . . .***, will be the sixth. Proposed publication date is early 2020. Seven more translated works await publication.

(*Note: Bill Bosch, Spearfish, SD, was initially scheduled for November. He is unable to make it in November, so we plan to host him another time in the future.)

Follow us on Facebook at: North Star Chapter of Minnesota

North Star Chapter 2019 Officers

President

Paul Maggitti
952.

Paul_Maggitti

1st VP/Program Chair

Carol Just

612.

CarolJjust

2ndVP/Membership

Lil Ward

763.

Treasurer

Art Stabner

507.

WaStabner

Secretary (Acting)

Ron Scherbenski

952.

RonScherbenski

GRHS Chapter Rep:

Marilyn Brink

Newsletter Layout & Editor

Nancy Gertner

612.

Website

www.northstarchapter.org

Webmaster

Sue Ward

NorthSChapter at Gmail.com

Chapter President's Message

by Paul Maggitti

It feels like an early winter is already upon us. Can *Weihnachtsfest* 2019 be far behind? Once again the chapter needs volunteers to plan for, set up and clean up following this popular event. Will it be 'someone,' 'anyone,' no one,' or 'everyone?' Our chapter has depended on nearly the same small group of chapter members to do this every December--isn't it time to have some new elves pitch in?

Speaking of *Weihnachtsfest*, I hope that many of you will prepare delicious German from Russian dishes to savor. I just recalled that in both 2016 and 2018 the *Weihnachtsfest* festivities ended early so everyone could make it home safely in the falling snow.

Election of the 2020 officers will take place during the chapter business meeting that starts at 1 p.m. on Saturday, November 16, 2019. The chapter fiscal year is from January to December each year. While we have volunteers for most officer positions, we still need a candidate for Secretary. Anyone can nominate someone--including themselves--for any of the elected officers during the business meeting elections: President; First VP for Programs; Second VP for Membership; Treasurer; and Secretary. Each elected officer serves for a one-year term, and no officer may serve for more than three consecutive terms in the office. The following candidates have agreed to run for 2020:

President, Paul Maggitti

First VP for Programs, Lil Ward

Second VP for Membership, Sue Ward

Treasurer, Art Stabner

Nancy and I enjoyed an October road trip to Iowa and Wisconsin. Nancy attended the Country Schools Conference, and we toured several one-room schools. We also enjoyed lodging at the historic Hotel Pattee, a railroad hotel in Perry, Iowa. Our drive home included Mississippi River Valley scenery and lunch at Villa Bellezza in Pepin, Wisconsin. It felt like being in Italy for a few glorious sun-filled moments on the outdoor patio. Many thanks to First VP Carol Just for running the October meeting in my absence.

NOTE on email addresses: Use this format when emailing chapter officers.

name@Provider.com (Replace the "at" with the @ symbol and use no spaces in between.)

North Star Chapter's 41st Annual *Weihnachtsfest*



Have a favorite holiday song? Ask Accordionist Extraordinaire Steve Weninger to play it!

utensils will be provided. Mark your dishes and serving spoons so they can return home with you. Electric outlets are available for crockpots.

Doors open at 11:30 AM so the food can be all set up to serve at noon. Don't be late!

If you are able, please volunteer for Friday night (December 6) to set up at 6 PM; or come early Saturday morning to help with last minute organizing. Cleanup assistance is also needed at the end of our celebration, typically around 3:30 p.m.. Please sign up at the November business meeting, or contact Lil Ward, VP of Membership by email: lilward@comcast.net.

**Saturday, December 7 2019
Berea Lutheran Church**

**7538 Emerson Ave. S.
Richfield, MN 55423**

11:30 a.m. - Set up buffet

12:00 p.m. - Meal

A great way to kick off the holiday season, our annual *Weihnachtsfest* promises good food, great music, *Gemütlichkeit*, and toy train play for children of all ages. Steve Weninger, accordionist extraordinaire, will perform his musical magic, entertaining us and leading us in song. The North Star Chapter *Weihnachtsfest* is a multi-generational event so bring the whole family!

This is a potluck event, an opportunity to prepare and share your favorite ethnic food. Beverages, plates, cups, glasses and eating



Jolly elves found food, music, and merriment at Weihnachtsfest in 2018.

AHSGR Convention Report

by Paul Winter and Virginia Morton

Notes on the AHSGR Convention:

We were the only two attendees from the North Star Chapter. We were there for the entire July 23rd to July 27th, 2019 event.

This was the Society's 50th anniversary. It has been a number of years since we attended one of their conventions. We both came away from the convention realizing it was an education greater than we had anticipated. The education was from the invited speakers. Topics presented kept us in full attention. There were several presentations by speakers that we strongly recommend inviting to our Chapter.

For example, Lee Macklin's presentation on "The Role of DNA in Alzheimer's" was very educational and superbly explained. We highly recommend that the Chapter invite Lee to speak. Mr. Macklin had information that is unavailable on the internet. His presentation was a real wake up call.

We also had several visits with Dr. Tonja Schell. Members may recall that Dr. Schell gave a presentation to the chapter in the summer of 2017. We discussed a large packet of German letters that Paul gave her from his family in the Volga Colonies.

The final day, Saturday July 27th, was held at AHSGR headquarters on D Street. The final day was called "Heritage Day." The museum at AHSGR headquarters is one to be envied by any German-Russian. Lunch was the famous Volga Boatman sandwich! What a big German brat, and all that endless sauerkraut! Just think about it! We can hardly wait to go again!

In Memorial: Elroy Allan Kelle, Former Member

Former North Star Chapter member, Elroy Kelle passed away on October 13, 2019. Elroy and Eloise (Fischer) Kelle were longtime active members of the North Star Chapter. They moved to Ashley, ND a few years ago. The notice below is from the *Aberdeen American News*. There will also be a memorial service held in Minnesota, November 16, at 4 pm at Hillside Church, 4300 West 98th St, Bloomington, MN. (952-831-5050)

Elroy Kelle, Ashley, ND:

Memorial service for Elroy Allan Kelle, 88, of Ashley will be 3:30 pm, Saturday, November 2, 2019 at Ashley Baptist Church. Rev. Alvin Foote will officiate. Burial at Black Hills National Cemetery.

Elroy died October 13, 2019.

Elroy is survived by his wife, Eloise.

In lieu of flowers, memorials to American Bible Society, 101 N. Independence Mall East SLB, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2155.

Carlsen Funeral Home of Ashley is entrusted with arrangements. www.carlsenf.com

Chapter News: Board of Directors Proposed Dues Increase for 2020, Members Voted Approval at September Meeting

North Star Chapter members voted to approve a dues increase for 2020 as recommended by the Board of Directors at the September meeting. The new annual chapter member price of \$20 per year is reflected on the member form on page 7.

An Ode to Bessarabia by Christian Idler

*Kennt ihr das Land, wo die akazien blüh'n,
im Feld der Mohn, die Sonnenblumen glüh'n,
wo Pappeln schlank auf Rebenhügeln steh'n,
in weiten Tälern Herden weidend geh'n?*

*Kennt ihr das Land, wo die Arbuse reift,
wo winters um das Dorf der Wolf noch streift,
und durch die Steppe, durch die Dörfer hin
so unstedt noch wie einst Zigeuner zieh'n?*

*Kennt ihr das Land, das zwischen Dnjester und
Prut
fern unter südlich blauem Himmel ruht,
da weit hinunter bis zum Schwarzen Meer
einst Mais- und Ährenfelder wogten schwer?*

*Kennt ihr es wohl, das Land, das hundert Jahr
Uns schwer errung'nes Heimatland einst war,
das stille, schöne, weite Steppenland,
das Sonnenland am fernen
Schwarzmeerstrand!*

Know you the land where acacias grow,
Where in poppy fields the sunflowers glow,
Where poplars tall o'er hilly vineyards blaze,
In far-flung vales the herds do graze?

Know you the land where melons ripen,
Where in winter's hamlet wolves still happen,
And through the steppe and hamlet fair
Unsettled as in past the gypsy still does dare?

Know you the land twixt Dniester and the Prut
That rests beneath blue sky so mute,
Far southward to the sea so tranquil,
There sway wheat fields without equal?

You know it well that for one hundred years,
It was a homeland won with bitter tears,
This quiet, splendid steppe of yore,
The land of sun on Black Sea's distant shore.

(English translation by James Gessele)

About the poem and author:

Christian Idler (1893-1975), born in Bessarabia and a school teacher there until 1940 when the Bessarabian Germans were repatriated to Germany. His writings did appear in print in Bessarabia, e.g. the newspaper *Deutsche Zeitung Bessarabiens*. His writings after 1949—many of them poems—were published in Germany and appeared in the annual publication *Heimatkalendar der Bessarabiendeutschen* until his death. He was beloved for the use of his native Swabian German in his work.

Dniester and Pruth Rivers flow into the Black Sea and the geographic landmass sandwiched between them made up the province of Bessarabia.

The North Star Chapter cookbook (**Sei Unser Gast**) and anthologies (**Hollyhocks and Grasshoppers** and **Watermelons and Thistles**) will be available for purchase at the November 16th Genealogy Day and the December 7th Weihnachtsfest. All three make excellent gifts. This is a great way to support the North Star Chapter and to keep our culture alive for future generations.

Also available all year at our website!

Author Rebecca Bender read from her book, *"Still,"* at our September meeting. Here is a link to a recent article she wrote, for the online *San Diego Jewish World*, <https://www.sdjewishworld.com/2019/10/19/a-jewish-tale-of-the-great-american-prairie/>

Toy Trains Become New Tradition at Weihnachtsfest

by Paul Maggitti

In the fall of 2015 I volunteered to set up a toy train layout with an appeal for children of all ages. To my delight, both the President and the VP of Programs were enthusiastic about my suggestion.

During layout planning, I settled on a figure 8 inside an outer loop with a transformer to power two tracks plus provide signals for bells and whistles. My wife, Nancy, helped select scenery to fit the layout. We included some Menards buildings, and Nancy added several Lemax items: a horse and sleigh, a park bridge, a gazebo with a brass band, and a family placing a Christmas tree atop their vintage car.

At *Weihnachtsfest* 2015 the toy train layout attracted visitors of all ages. After the meal, children and adults enjoyed watching the holiday trains glide over the tracks. Several enthusiastic volunteers ran the trains using the big transformer.

When planning for 2016 *Weihnachtsfest*, I wanted the train layout to have maximum play value, so I selected a two loop layout with updated FasTrack powered by two FasTrack 18-Watt power supplies. The layout components were carefully loaded into our vehicle and Nancy asked if I had included everything needed. I was embarrassed to discover half way through the set up that some FasTrack straight sections and the LionChief terminal sections were forgotten. This was corrected by a trip home to secure the missing parts. *No, I hadn't made a list, and I hadn't checked it twice!*

In the social time leading up to our noontime feast, I demonstrated how to use the LionChief remote controls. After finishing their the meal, several children implored me to let them play with the trains. Soon the clatter of LionChief locomotives along with their rail sounds filled the room. Mother nature soon made a swift end to train playtime with a quickening snow shower that inspired the Chapter President to end our celebration early so everyone could travel home safely.

In 2017, I was again encouraged to set up a train layout for *Weihnachtsfest*. I was intrigued with making a more complex layout with two loops, with one crossing over itself. As my collection of buildings had recently grown, I relied upon Nancy's assistance to select buildings and features to represent a small town or village.

For new children and visitors in 2017, I demonstrated LionChief remote control features so anyone could run the trains. After the the meal, two youngsters gravitated to the LionChief remotes and soon the trains were speeding around the tracks. While the clatter of trains and their rail sounds was music to my ears, I sensed some others were annoyed by the racket. In best efforts to compromise, I encouraged the junior engineers to play with the remotes a little less aggressively and moderate the sound effects.

Cleaning up was light work, with assistance from volunteers including my brother, who carefully packed all components.

In 2018, I felt a new sense of freedom to plan a *Weihnachtsfest* layout with the Acting President a toy train enthusiast. Settling on a simple two-loop layout that came together at a two rail bridge, buildings included a dairy barn. The layout was enjoyed by many mature children.

North Star Chapter Membership Form**I belong to:**
☐ New ☐ Renew ☐ Individual ☐ Family

 AHSGR ☐ And / Or GRHS ☐

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

National Membership: ☐ AHSGR ☐ GRHS ☐ Both**Local dues are \$20 per year per family, plus membership in either AHSGR or GRHS.****AHSGR members please submit \$70 (\$50 for AHSGR, \$20 for North Star).****GRHS members please submit \$85. (\$65 for GRHS, \$20 for North Star).**

***Please make your check payable to North Star Chapter and submit to:
Lil Ward, Mounds View, MN 55112***

Toy Trains (continued from Page 6.)

Mother nature compelled an early end to our festivities, with rapidly falling snow prompting an early *Auf Wiedersehen* to *Weihnachtsfest* so everyone could travel home safely. The faithful volunteers who carefully helped pack up track, trains and layout were greatly appreciated. Nancy and I waved goodbye to John Hafner with about four inches of fresh snow in the parking lot, and Nancy safely navigated our loaded sleigh home. I unpacked my toy trains the next day.

And now for *Weihnachtsfest* 2019! The President is an avid toy train fan and always appreciates a layout designed to delight children of all ages. With Nancy's assistance, this layout shall be entertaining without being unduly complex. In addition to remembering toys from our childhoods, we remember the important role trains played when our ancestors made their new homes in North America.

Trains typically provided transportation from port cities to the plains states, where homestead land was available. Trains brought lumber and goods to the new towns on the rail lines. Rail provided a network for farmers to get their grains to mills and ports, and their livestock to stockyards. Passenger rail also took soldiers, sailors, and marines to their new duties, and provided a means of escape or reunion for others.

**NOTE: Submission Deadline for the next newsletter is 15 December 2019. Please put newZletter in the subject line, and email inputs to:
NancyGertner
No Zip files please!**

North Star Chapter
of Minnesota
AHSGR / GRHS Affiliated
Non-Profit Organization
PO Box 583642
Minneapolis, MN 55458

2019 Schedule

November 16: Genealogy Research Day (AM)

PM: Officer Elections and Program:

Jim Gessele: It's Not Enough to Simply Fill in
a Genealogy Chart!

December 7: Weihnachtsfest: Annual
celebration with meal, music and fellowship.

2020 Planned Meeting and Event

Dates:

(Subject to change due to speaker schedules and facility
availability; check website or Facebook page for updates)

January 18

**February 15: Genealogy Research Day in
Chapter Library (Morning)**

March 21

April 25: Spring Banquet

Member News

Sharon Chmielarz, poet
and author, recently
published a new collection
of poems titled
"The J Horoscope."

As described at

[KirkusReview.com](https://www.kirkusreviews.com) ,

" . . . collected poems imaginatively
take the viewpoint of J, one of four
writers of the Bible's book of
Genesis. This collection focuses on
connections between contemporary
experiences and those recorded in
ancient biblical texts."

The Kirkus Review website includes
online booksellers and suggestions
for Indie Bookstores that carry the
book. Sharon sometimes does
readings at local book and literary
events.