

Newsletter

Winter 2005



Sunflower Chapter
of the American
Historical Society
of Germans
from Russia

Next Meeting

SOCIAL...12:00
POTLUCK DINNER...12:30
MEETING...1:30
PROGRAM...2:00

Dec. 11

If you have been thinking of inviting someone to join AHSGR, now is definitely the time to show that person what our group is all about. Bring a guest, bring a dish, and come on out to Munjor for an old-fashioned German celebration that you'll be sure to remember for years to come.

Following Leona Pfeifer's presentation on Volga German folklore will be a Christmas concert and sing-along led by Victoria's talented Galen Schmidtberger, composer of the much-loved song "Kleine Kinder."

Also on the program is TMP-Marian foreign exchange student Jan (pronounced "Yon") Jensch, who will share how Christmas is celebrated in his native city of Luebeck, Germany. Last year we heard from a native of Bavaria, so this year it will be interesting to note how holiday customs compare between northern and southern Germany.

And as if all that weren't reason enough to come, remember that you could be one of the lucky winners of our annual Christmas door prizes. So mark your calendars now, and see you soon!

ATTENTION, EARLY PLANNERS: Our annual Fasnacht meeting will be on February 26.



Fall meeting takes a musical turn

by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

ALL MEMBERS WHO WERE STILL FEELING ALL RIGHT AFTER EATING Kevin Rupp's green bean dumpling soup (just kidding, Kevin!) sampled a treat of a different kind at the October 23 chapter meeting. Members watched a new video from Prairie Public Broadcasting of Fargo, North Dakota, *A Soulful Sound: Music of the Germans from Russia*.

It was not, strictly speaking, a concert tape because it blended excerpts from various musical numbers with expert commentary. A couple of highlights were a performance at a traditional Russian German wedding reception in Strasburg, North Dakota, and an evening of "Dutch hop" music in Torrington, Wyoming.

Featured musical groups were mostly North Dakotan and included St. Andrew's Lutheran Centennial Choir from Zeeland, the University of Mary Concert Choir from Bismarck, the Jamestown College Concert Choir from Jamestown, the Alive Gospel Choir from the Kulm area, the Centennial Men's Choir from the Harvey area, and folk singers from the Napoleon area.

The tape included 34 numbers in all. Along with songs less familiar to the Russian Germans of our area were these old favorites: "Wir sitzen so froehlich beisammen," "Sei gegruesst, O Jungfrau rein," "Schoen ist die Jugend," and "Grosser Gott, wir loben dich."

The CD can be ordered from AHSGR by going to www.ahsgr.org/music-cds.htm or e-mailing ahsgr@ahsgr.org with "Store Manager" put in the subject line. Remember to ask for your AHSGR member's discount when you place your order.

If you prefer the DVD version, visit www.lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/grhc/order/tapes/soulfulsound.html or call the North Dakota State University Library at 701-231-8416 and ask for *A Soulful Sound* from its Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. Cost to US residents is \$30 per DVD plus \$4 postage and handling.



Kevin Rupp's Genealogy Update

What's new in genealogy? A few things! I have completed the Obermunjou 1857 census. This was one that Dr. Igor Pleve told us was not available, but our contact in St. Petersburg stumbled upon a book that had this census as well as the Zug 1857, Luzern 1857, and Katarinenstadt 1857 censuses. The ones for Luzern and Obermunjou have been completed, and I hope to start the Zug census soon. For new items check my website, www.volgagerman.net. Our Sunflower Chapter page is also connected to this site.

I have been in touch with Brent Mai, and he is beginning work on the 1834 census lists. Pleve's third volume of first settlers lists, *Einwanderung in das Wolgagebiet, 1764-1767*, is supposed to be available before Christmas. Keep on eye on the national headquarters newsletter for updated information.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The times for our October and December meetings went by all too quickly! *Please remember* that your dues are due. We would like to have these mailed or given to Elmer by our next meeting if at all possible.

I would like to welcome Jeremy Dannenbohm to our board of directors as publicity chair. I feel that he will do our organization a wonderful service in promoting us in every way he can. In fact, Jeremy is putting together a promotion page to run soon on channel 14. Our ad will run, roughly, from December 1 to December 31. Watch for it. We are also talking about getting on the *Take 30* program for an interview. Always remember, however, that it is still the direct one-to-one contact of our members with their friends and relatives that usually brings in new members. As Leona Pfeifer pointed out when she gave us a program on the German dialects, the next ten years will be critical for preserving our Volga German heritage here in Ellis and Rush Counties. That is another reason why we are happy to have Galen Schmidtberger scheduled for our Christmas meeting. He will entertain us with some traditional *Weihnachts Lied*.

Mark your calendars now for the Kansas Round-Up to be held on October 21, 2006. Our chapter will be in charge and we will need your help.

Finally, because Bishop Paul Coakley will be visiting our parish of St.

Joseph on the same day as our Christmas program I will not be able to attend, but Betty Leiker will get her feet wet as President and conduct the meeting.

--Kevin Rupp

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Yes, as you can see, the make-over craze sweeping the nation has hit our chapter newsletter, too. After being hit by lightning this summer, my computer was declared DOA at the repair shop. Only in buying a new one did I learn that all of my backup copies of the newsletter were stored in a form of technology that had become obsolete. And this they call "progress"!

Besides forcing me to redesign the newsletter, this mishap also caused me to lose all your e-mail addresses. Anyone who would like to be back on my e-mail list, please let me know with an e-mail to rossiya@ruraltel.net. In the meantime, you can always download a copy of the latest newsletter at www.volgagerman.net. I highly recommend that you get the electronic form of the chapter news, if you can, because it is in full color. You'll be surprised at how different it looks from the humdrum black-and-white version.

As my graduate studies in theology continue, I remain limited in how much time I can spend on the newsletter. That is why it is four pages long now. I will gladly expand it back to six pages, though, if a few of you would like to sign on as regular contributors. I would ask, simply, that

you commit to meeting five deadlines in 2006: January 15, March 15, May 15, September 15, and November 15. Snail-mail or e-mail me your column by each of these dates. Here are my ideas for columns that you could sign up for:

How's Your German? Eight-ten short sentences in one of the local dialects, with English translations.

Overheard A short anecdote from the old days--you know, one of those funny true stories that our Volga German friends and relatives like to tell on each other at get-togethers.

Photo Feature An old-time photo along with a few sentences explaining the who, what, when, where, and why of the picture.

Cemetery Sightings Short descriptions of two-three of the older and more interesting headstones to be found in our local Volga German cemeteries.

History Hunter Any newspaper article older than 75 years can be republished without infringing on a copyright. Find an interesting article pertaining to our people at a local library and mail me a photocopy. Did you know, for example, that the Rush County News in the pre-WWI years had a weekly gossip column called, I believe, "Liebenthal Locals"? The Barnard Library in La Crosse had these on microfilm, the last I knew.

To volunteer, call me at 785-625-4814.

--Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

Volga German Folklore

- * If your nose itches, soon you will hear some news.
- * If your right hand itches, soon you will spend some money.
- * If your left hand itches, soon you will receive some money.

OVERHEARD

This is a true story told of Felix Wasinger when he was a little tot. They say it is funnier in German, but here it goes in English, anyway. One day the folks had company. It was a nice day, the men sat outside, and the women were indoors. Felix thought he could get a cookie or two from his mom because they had company. When he went indoors and asked, he was refused the cookies. Upset with his mom and intent on revenge, he went back outside, called for his dog, slipped his arm out of his new shirt, and said, "Here, puppy, tear it up. Mom can fix it."



Tribute to Lawrence Weigel from his son

Part Two

Lawrence Weigel Jr. wrote this biography as a gift to his father while Lawrence Sr. was still alive. In Part One, published in the last issue, we learned of the pre-WWI courtship and marriage of Lawrence Sr.'s parents, Albert J. Weigel and Gertrude Kuhn. After Lawrence's father died in 1918 from the Spanish flu, his mother with her two young children, Lawrence and Leona, then moved back home to the farm of her father, Nicholas Kuhn.

DAD SPENT MOST OF HIS EARLY LIFE in Victoria. He attended parochial school and his favorite teacher in first grade was Sister Aquina. Dad wrote, "There could be no better teacher for first graders than that sister because she was a native Volga German girl who spoke German and loved children."

Dad did not speak English until he entered first grade because every Volga German descendant in Victoria spoke conversational German. Sister Aquina helped him make the transition from German to English in school and this had a lasting impression on him.

Brother Wendlin also influenced Dad's life because he managed the internal functions of the now-famous Cathedral of the Plains and introduced Dad to the world of altar boys. Dad said his most memorable day as an elementary student was "wearing the cassock of the altar boy for the first time and appearing in the sanctuary with the priest."

Dad has always accepted what was good about a person, like his grandfather Kuhn, and played down any negative traits that might have existed. This is very typical of my dad and the trait I admire most.

I enjoyed reading about my great-grandparents on the Weigel side. Dad put together a biographical sketch of them in his 107-page Weigel family history book that I've been reading during the past two days. Here's what he said about his grandparents on the Weigel side: "My grandparents John P. Weigel, born 2/13/1882 in Herzog, Russia, and his wife Maria Pfeifer, born 7/25/1873, were very dear to me. I loved them very much. Grandpa Weigel was a kind, considerate and honorable man. He did not drink or smoke. He was the kind of person [of whom] others would say, 'He doesn't have an enemy in the world.' I can recall sitting on my grandpa Weigel's lap as a child as he held me close, he rubbed his tender whiskers on my tender face, and teasingly told me that I would soon grow a beard. I could feel the deep love we had for each other."

He felt the same about his grandma Weigel. He said, "I loved her just as much as I loved my grandpa Weigel." One thing Dad remembers about his grandma Weigel was that her shoes were always shined, her laces perfectly tied, and her hair well-groomed. My great-grandma Weigel was also an astute businesswoman when it came to renting a farm, buying cattle, or handling other family financial matters. She was

Great-Grandpa Weigel's business manager.

Age ten was most memorable for Dad when he attended a three-day celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Volga German settlements in Ellis and Rush Counties. Dad mentions in his memoirs that the parade consisted of a replica of the ship S.S. Ohio, and his great-grandma, Gertrude Kuhn, the oldest living survivor at that time, sat on the deck of the mock ship and was saying the rosary while others played and sang Volga German folk songs. Dad said the song "Einst Lebt ich wohl in meinen Vaterland" was sung, and he'll never forget that special moment.

My great-uncle, Father Virgil Kuhn, a Capuchin priest, influenced my dad's life ever since Dad was one of the Mass servers at Father Virgil's first Mass as a priest held in June of 1928. After Dad graduated from eighth grade, he went with Father Virgil to Frontenac, Kansas, then on to Joplin, Missouri, where he boarded a train and traveled to St. Louis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and finally Herman, Pennsylvania, where he spent the next three years studying to be a priest just like his uncle.

--TO BE CONTINUED

**LAST
CALL**

for 2006 dues!

YES! Please renew my/our membership in the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (\$50) and the Sunflower Chapter (\$5).

Name(s) _____


Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Thanks to all of you who renewed your membership at our last chapter meeting. Nothing could be easier than handing a check to our treasurer, Elmer Dreher, and having him take care of your local and national dues all at once.

For another \$55, please provide a gift membership for the person/couple listed below.

But for those of you who prefer doing things the hard way (and we know who you are!) kindly fill out this form and mail it to Elmer, along with your check, **BY DEC. 11.** You'll feel a whole lot better when you do (or at least we will!) 

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

--Your Friendly Local Chapter Officers

With a check payable to SUNFLOWER CHAPTER, clip and send this form to **ELMER DREHER * 1319 MACARTHUR RD. * HAYS, KS 67601.**

**THANK
YOU!**

SUNFLOWER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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