

ORGANIZING THE LINCOLN CHAPTER

Delores Schwartz got the following for me, and after I've read it several times, I decided to share it with all of you. It's worth reading, and maybe it will put a fire under you to try to get uninformed members involved, get your children involved (Diane White has her three children at every function and they help with the work, too) and getting new members.

Delores Schwartz has had her grandchildren down at the Heritage Center and their work was applied to their school requirements. Barb Schmidt has had her nephew helping mow.

Hmmmm, I managed to get on my soap box again, didn't I?

Read about, and enjoy, the founding of the first chapter of AHSGR, The Lincoln Chapter.

SO YOU PLAN TO ORGANIZE AN AHSGR CHAPTER ... HOW WE DID IT IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

In our files there is a memo from David J. Miller, National President of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. It is dated February 6, 1969, and it lists the names of the members in Lincoln, Nebraska, as of that date – 3 individual members and one family membership. A letter of the same date suggests that Mrs. Delores K. Schwartz and Ruth M. Amen plan an organization meeting in Lincoln. The suggestion became a charge when the two of us and Delores' mother, Mrs. Katherine Gibelhouse, attended a meeting in Denver on March 2. The International Board asked us to organize a Chapter in Lincoln.

Our own enthusiasm was great. The program in Denver and the opportunity to visit with others who were interested in their heritage indicated to us that there must be many more Lincolinites who would want to share in the excitement of learning more about the history and achievements of Germans from Russia.

How should we begin? This was the question which Delores, her mother, and I discussed on March 12. We decided to invite several friends and relatives to a "talk it over" session and to acquaint them with the goals and purposes of AHSGR. On May 15, there were 7 of us at a meeting held at the American Forward Association. Our 4 recruits listened and questioned and thought this organization was long overdue. They wanted to join and they would help spread the word. Again

each person present agreed to invite several others to help us get a Chapter started and on June 13 we met again. There were several new faces, but we were still 7. Patiently we again described AHSGR, its goals and hopes and with enthusiasm running high, we decided to work individually during the summer months lining up recruits to bring to a meeting on September 12. Others who had joined in the meantime were also invited. When 10 showed up we took the giant step. We, Edward Schwartzkopf, Mrs. Magdalene Lebsack Novak, Mrs. Marie Willis, Miss Clara Wertz, Mrs. Marie Collins, Ralph Gibelhaus, Roger L. Welsch, Miss Frances D. Amen, Mrs. Delores K. Schwartz, and Miss Ruth M. Amen, would be the Committee. Boldly we set Sunday afternoon, November 18, 1969, as the date for a "come one, come all" meeting.

We had 3 more planning sessions on October 2 and 22 and November 5 to suggest names of people to invite, to plan the program, and to just plain keep our planning group excited about the project we had undertaken. Then we kept our fingers crossed. By this time we had about 22 national members in Lincoln and we hoped at least all of these would appear.

How do you estimate the turn-out for your first meeting? We had sent out about 80 flyers to Lincoln people and told them to bring their friends. We also mailed notices to every AHSGR member in Nebraska in case any of them would be in Lincoln at that time.

We placed flyers in stores and on Church bulletin boards. We decided to plan on 60 to 70 and told ourselves that we should not be discouraged if at least 35 appeared. The Committee arrived an hour ahead of the meeting time and soon there were others. As people came, they signed a register and received name tags. Imagine our delight! When Ed Schwartzkopf, our Master of Ceremonies, said "Guten Tag" to the group, there were 126 assembled in the Community Room of the National Bank of Commerce.

Our program? It was very simple. We "played it by ear" for the most part. We had an invocation by Paul J. Amen and heard special greetings from our Mayor, Sam Schwartzkopf, one of our own people. We told them about the organization. Each person present introduced himself and as they told which colony in Russia they or their parents came from we tallied the reports. Some told interesting stories about their early days in this country. The oldest person present was 92, the youngest under 10. Rev. Benjamin Rieger told about the dulcimer and how he builds them. There was much interest in the maps showing the German-Russian colonies and were were sold out much too soon. We told the group about Dr. Karl Stumpp's book, The German-Russian, which has been translated by Dr. Joseph S. Height. Led by Mrs. Victor Maul, we sang some old favorites in German – Jesu Geh Voran, Oh Du Fröhliche, Gott Ist Die

(continued on page 4)



Organizing...

(continued from page 3)

Liebe, Stille Nacht, and So Nim Den Meine Hände.

We allowed lots of time for visiting, renewing friendships, getting reacquainted with kinfolk, and looking at exhibits of memorabilia brought by those who came. Coffee and cookies furnished by the bank were served. All of us were aglow. One person wrote, "I came away feeling filled with pride and enthusiasm." "Did they want to meet again?," we asked. The answer was a resounding "yes." And 44 new members paid their dues that afternoon.

Encouraged by this beginning, our committee has moved forward. From the meeting roster and the national membership list we made a card file in three sections - Lincoln members, out-state Nebraska members and prospective members. We now have a better mailing list to which we keep adding.

Our second meeting, held in the same location on March 8, 1970, attracted 176. Mr. and Mrs. David J. Miller and Mrs. Gerda Walker came from Colorado. The Millers showed their pictures taken in Russia. There were 23 out-of-towners including the Herman Aments from Sioux City, Iowa. We enrolled 21 new members. A dinner meeting for the committee members, our Colorado visitors, Senator and Mrs. Ted Wenzlaff, Dr. and Mrs. Donald Herzog, and others who had helped

with our meetings the night before gave us the opportunity to discuss many things related to the organization and its future.

A welcome problem now confronted us. We had outgrown our meeting place. When the Welfare Society invited us to use their facilities for a meeting, we accepted gladly. Our May 24, 1970 meeting flyer announced that we would feature German-Russian food "prepared by the best cooks this side

approach had been to get them to join the national organization first by offering interesting programs, involving lots of people and by giving all a sense of participation. We are ready to enroll new AHSGR members at every meeting. Each program is planned so they leave asking when we will meet again. By this time that canary yellow flyer in the mail means a good time ahead.

Excitement over the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia continues to ride high in Lincoln. 14 of us attended the Greeley convention where the announcement was made that we had been granted the first Chapter Charter on June 4, 1970. What we gleaned from that convention we tried to pass on to our other members at a Chapter dinner on October 8, 1970, with 212 present. The authentic "Broda" menu was prepared and served by members of the Chapter Board and their wives. Directors added to the original committee were Conrad Gabelhaus, G. Scotty Kaufman, and Jake Sinner. Mrs. Gabelhaus, Mrs. Sinner, Mrs. Schwartz, and Mrs. Marie Gannon were chief cooks.

Excitement over the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia continues to ride high in Lincoln. 14 of us attended the Greeley convention where the announcement was made that we had been granted the first Chapter Charter on June 4, 1970. What we gleaned from that convention we tried to pass on to our other members at a Chapter dinner on October 8, 1970, with 212 present. The authentic "Broda" menu was prepared and served by members of the Chapter Board and their wives. Directors added to the original committee were Conrad Gabelhaus, G. Scotty Kaufman, and Jake Sinner. Mrs. Gabelhaus, Mrs. Sinner, Mrs. Schwartz, and Mrs. Marie Gannon were chief cooks.

of heaven." There were grebel, runza, coffee cake, rye bred, homemade sausage and lots of coffee. Our oldest members provided the program. Mr. John Strauch and Mr. Henry J. Amen told about their early days in Lincoln and Mr. Gottfried Schumacher played several selections on the dulcimer. We always sing. This time we were led by Henry Hohnstein. The First International Convention to be held in Greeley, Colorado, in June was promoted. Most important of all, the group unanimously agreed that they wanted a permanent organization in Lincoln. Our

the Chapter Board and their wives. Directors added to the original committee were Conrad Gabelhaus, G. Scotty Kaufman, and Jake Sinner. Mrs. Gabelhaus, Mrs. Sinner, Mrs. Schwartz, and Mrs. Marie Gannon were chief cooks.

It was a distinct honor when the convention accepted our invitation to host the Second International Convention which is to be held June 17-20, 1971, here in Lincoln. We hope all of you will plan to enjoy it with us.

Ruth M. Amen, President
Lincoln, Nebraska Chapter