



# THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

## Lincoln Chapter

Volume III

October 1995

Issue X

### Chapter Officers

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### Scheduled Coming Events

**November 3, 1995 Annual Broda Dinner - with Speaker**

5:30 to 7:00 P.M.

WSI Hall 1430 N. 10th St.

See registration form on outside cover

**November 14, 1995 LLCGS (Lincoln Lancaster County Genealogical Society)**

7:00 P.M.

Dick Administration Building (Lower Level) Union College Campus

**November 18, 1995 PAF-LUG (Personal Ancestral File-Lincoln User's Group)**

7:00 P.M.

Family Service Center 3100 Old Cheney Road

**November 21, 1995 AHSGR BOARD MEETING**

7:00 P.M.

Conference Room -AHSGR Headquarters Bldg.

### Editor's Notes:

Don't forget our Broda Dinner!

Don't forget! We have open house at Headquarters on October 8, for the dedication of the Headquarters Building honoring our own member Jake Sinner.

### President's Notes:

For those of you who didn't get to Calgary for the convention, you missed a good time. Everywhere Norma and I went, we were treated to the friendliest hospitality we have ever experienced. Canadians surely must be the friendliest people anywhere. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay in Canada and the Convention.

I have to criticize my countrymen however. I heard a lot of people grouching about Canadian banking and having to pay for things at the convention, with Canadian dollars. Get alive, People! How do Canadians pay for things at Conventions held in the States? I can tell you they didn't pay in Canadian dollars here in Lincoln!

For those of you who weren't able to attend our last general meeting and pot-luck lunch, you missed a great time. Our program was presented by Samuel Sinner, folklorist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, along with some very talented friends with him. One of his friends played the piccolo to one of Bach's compositions, others recited German poetry, first in German then in English. Samuel played folk songs on his violin, and also recited some German folklore.

When Samuel talked about how the tree is such an important part of German folklore, we all saw the connection that the first Christmas tree had in German culture. When Samuel was reciting some old folk sayings our ancestors used, I noticed a lot of heads nodding up and down with big smiles. Some of our members recalled hearing these same words. All in all, it was an excellent program, and I wish all of our members could have enjoyed the program that was presented by these fine young men.

Remember the Broda Dinner coming up in November. Cost of the tickets will be \$7.50 same as last year. The dinner will be at the WSI Hall, which should help with the parking problem. Tickets will be limited to members only, on a first come, first served basis. You will be able to get tickets from any of our board members. If we haven't sold all of the



tickets two weeks before the dinner, they can be purchased for prospective members.

The time is fast approaching when we have to elect members to your Board of Directors. With this in mind, I want to take time to remind you that this is your chapter and its only as good as your participation makes it. Get involved! If you are interested in serving on the board, please give, Gladys Herstein, Ann Rietz or myself a call. We will be happy to put your name on the ballot. If you have someone in mind that would be a good board member, talk to them or have a board member talk to them.

All of you unsung heroes who volunteer work at our Heritage Center, you great people who come to mow, clean, repair, shovel, file, type, stuff envelopes for mailing, serve on committees, quilt, microfilm, and those who just generally brighten up so many days, I wish you would have been at the convention to hear Kathy Schultz, our Executive Director, pay tribute to all when she gave her report to those gathered at the convention.

If you have ever wondered if you were appreciated let me lay your mind to rest. It was one of the best tributes I have heard. In essence Kathy said it would be very difficult for the Heritage Center to operate without all of the dedicated volunteers.

One last thing, before I close- Membership.

Nationally, our membership is down. We need to be thinking about and working on this problem. Your chapter has been getting started on this and we will have more information in upcoming newsletters. If you have any ideas concerning how it increase membership, please contact one of the other board members and give us your thoughts

In closing, I leave you with this thoughts:

Although insured  
Remember kiddo,  
They don't pay you,  
They pay your widow.

Thanks for listening!

P S The quilters have outdone themselves with the quilt they made for our raffle. Tickets will be available soon.

Larry Schenkel, Lincoln Chapter President

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## Wall Street Journal August 18, 1995

Another Mutant Gene linked to Alzheimer's found by researchers

Washington Researchers uncovered yet another mutant gene linked to Alzheimer's disease.

The new found mutant was discovered in seven American families that are haunted by an inherited form of Alzheimer's. The families are descendants of German's who emigrated to two villages in the Volga region of Russia in the mid 18th century. Researchers said they suspect the families had a common ancestor who carried the mutant gene for Alzheimer's disease.

The mutant gene in the Volga Germans is the third mutant gene found to be somehow linked to the inherited forms of Alzheimer's disease. A fourth genetic link to the brain disorder seems to involve an uncommon but not necessarily mutant version of a gene called apo E gene.

Researchers hope that if they can discover what these genes are doing - or failing to do-they may be able to unravel the mystery of what underlies Alzheimer's which affects about four million Americans and kills about 100,000 a year.

The discovery of the mutant gene is reported in this week's issue of Science by researchers from the Veteran's Administration, The University of Washington and Darwin Molecular Corp., all in Seattle, and from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

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### Reprint from the Northern Illinois Chapter of AHSGR for August-September-October 1995

From the E-Mail Internet the following information was received from Tim Kloberdanz of North Dakota Higher Education Computer Network.

Kolberdanz has been working with the medical team in Seattle since 1987. This team has been doing research on Alzheimer's in relation to certain Volga Germans families who have a high incidence of the disease. Kloberdanz has also been tracing these particular families back to Germany, (chiefly the Darmstadt-Franfurt-Fulda-Aschaffenburg areas of Hesse and northwestern Bavaria), to see if a geographical origin can be found.

Key surnames in the research cannot be released due to confidentiality.

The concern with the reporting of this research is and has always been that an "Alzheimer's stigma" might be attached to all German-Russian descendants - especially among those people in the former USSR and in Germany. Dr. Thomas Bird, main researcher of the medical team in Seattle, is sensitive to these concerns and has always tried to set the



record straight at every opportunity. He has lectured at international conventions of the AHSGR on at least three occasions (Chicago 1991, Seattle 1992, and Calgary 1995). Each time he made it clear that only a small group of Germans from Russia are involved.

On August 18, when news of a recent discovery about a "missing Alzheimer's gene" that caused the disease in some Volga Germans was announced, a number of newspapers made it sound like Alzheimer's is more widespread among the Germans from Russia than it really is. This is most unfortunate, says Dr. Kloberdanz. Most of the afflicted families stem from one of two neighboring Volga German villages, Frank and Walter. But these villages were fairly large and there are numerous Frank and Walter descendants today who are free of the disease. Dr. Bird, in the August 18 issue of the Seattle Times, emphasized "that Volga Germans as a whole do not have any more Alzheimer's than other ethnic group - just some families with links to these two villages."

Those of you who desire to read detailed information about this latest Alzheimer's Disease discovery and how it relates to a small segment of the Volga German population , look for the August 18, 1995 issue of *SCIENCE* magazine (vol 269) It included three articles relating to the discovery of the Alzheimer's gene in certain Volga families. The overview article by Marcia Barinage (p. 917-918) May be the most easily understood and is not so technical as the more extensive articles.

Dr. Kloberdanz concludes that if any one does know of multiple case of Alzheimer's one may want to contact the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in Seattle 1-800/235-1597, to speak to Ellen Nemens, research nurse.

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### **WANTED TO BUY**

**A "Babushka" (old German Russian woman) Doll  
with a Halstuck (shawl), black dress, white or black apron  
Preferably one with black hair, (could have gray hair**

**Will pay for doll**

**Call Lillian Giebelhaus**

**402/-423-4697**

**(has answering service, in case she would not be home at the time you call)**

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### **UNSURE LEUTE**

#### **DER JAHRSTAG (HAPPY ANNIVERSARY)**

**Congratulations to:**

**November 4, 1943 Haseltine and Tony Chonouskie  
November 23, 1951 Norma Jean and Richard Stauffer  
November 28, 1940 Thelma and William Zitterkopf**

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#### **GEBURTSAG (HAPPY BIRTHDAY)**

**November 2 Helen Reifschneider  
November 5 Lois Sorensen  
November 8 W. W. Hahn  
November 14 Tom Mandeville  
November 19 Harold Heidenreich  
November 21 Norma Schenkel  
November 23 Elsa Amen  
November 27 Marjorie Nagel**

**November 3 Ferd Nuss  
November 8 Sidonia Babcock  
November 9 Jim Sommers  
November 17 Henry Niederhaus  
November 19 Dorothy Sinner  
November 21 Adam Schwindt  
November 25 Ann Reitz  
November 27 Richard Pearce**

**November 27 Ardith Stuertz**

**Don't forget to send in your names for inclusion of the birthdays and anniversary section each month**

**Send your requests to: Hugh Dobler, 3747 Woods Ave. Lincoln, NE. 68510**

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The average American will consume 50 tons of food in a lifetime.**

**The average American will eat 130 pounds of sugar a year.**

**At 60 miles per hour, it would take 176 years to drive to the sun.**

**On the planet Mercury, a year lasts only 88 days.**

**The Saquaro cactus is the slowest growing plant, taking 30 years for one branch.**

**The human brain can store up to 100 trillion bits of information.**



Continuing our thumb nail sketch of persons with members of The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia  
(We have finished with sketches of Staff Personnel, and are continuing with local members and also members of the International Board of AHSGR)

## HENRY BLITZ

Henry Blitz, Jr. was born August 14, 1914 to Henry and Marie Christine (Bieden, Rebensdorf) Blitz at Lincoln, Nebraska. He attended the public schools in Lincoln, graduating in 1933.

While in high school he enlisted in night classes for electrical work. During the years after graduation, Henry attended classes at the Lincoln Telephone Company and The National School of Commerce in order to become an electrician.

At the age of 21, when jobs were almost impossible to find, Henry found a job as an extra on the railroad under Adam Baker, who was General Foreman at the Repair Depot for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.

On May 31, 1936, Henry married a girl from the South Bottoms, Mollie Walter, who had attended Everett and Lincoln High Schools, and had known each other for many years.

In 1939, Henry became an Electrician's helper at the Lincoln Repair Depot, graduating to Electrician by 1941.

In 1941, Henry enlisted in the Air Force, where he served the first 2 1/2 years. With the war coming to an end, he was transferred along with 500,000 others to the Infantry. When the "Battle of the Bulge" ( a military maneuver by Germany that surrounded the American Troops at Christmas 1944, and became a serious situation for the American troops for a month or so) erupted, Henry was in the thick of it. While cleaning up some maneuvers, the Americans came upon a company of Germans, who were just as surprised as they were. Henry being able to speak German, told the Germans to give up, they were surrounded. The Germans surrendered. From that experience, he became the interpreter for the company whose job it was to monitor and maintain order in 17 German villages. He was able to ride in a jeep with the jeep driver and the Lieutenants ("We had two Lieutenants, a different one each other day", Henry said), as they made their rounds.

Coming back in 1945, he spent two days at home before reporting for work with the railroad again, continuing to work in Lincoln for the next 7 1/2 years.

It was with great rejoicing that on May 31, 1950, their only daughter was born after 13 years of marriage. (Since then Mary Ann married Steve Gorba Jr. in August 1975; now lives in Toledo, Ohio, with the rest of her family. Steve and Mary Ann have four children, Michael 17, David 14, Stephanie 11 and Katie 7. Although they live in Toledo, Steve who is the Postmaster in Defiance, Ohio, drives the short distance to and from his work).

In 1952, Henry was transferred to Burlington, Iowa

From here, he transferred to Chicago in 1957, as a Mechanical Inspector for three years. Another transfer, to a subsidiary railroad, the Colorado Southern and Forth Worth, Denver Railroad. as Superintendent of Equipment. Henry was transferred back to Chicago in 1961 as Electrical Engineer until 1970.

As Electrical Engineer you were responsible for the operations of the electrical equipment, going into the field to assure the right equipment was used, and helping to instruct employees in the use of this equipment.

Prior to his appointment as Electrical Engineer, the manufacturers of the locomotives (EMD and General Electric) would issue a set of blue prints for each locomotive and each air conditioned car. This set would stay at headquarters. When Henry came on board, this soon changed, as he now had blue prints made and issued a set for each locomotive. These were then sent out to all repair shops, along with the proper procedure to changing the circuitry on all locomotives and air conditioned cars.

In addition to the blue prints, he made certain the men had the proper tools to do the work. For example, in Lincoln there were 8 different types of locomotives with a different electrical circuit on each one, each with a different set of blue prints. He also made sure that all places had voltage meters. One time when he came to Lincoln, he was presented with a new voltage meter. Prior to his appointment, he had a meter, but left it at Lincoln. The local men used it. They broke it, so when he came through the men presented him with a new one!

At that time the electricians were required to oversee all generators, on each of the locomotives and cars. The generators were belt driven, by 6 two inch belts from the axles. The condensers were also overhauled by the electricians. They always had to make sure that everyone had the same electrical wires, so they wouldn't get into trouble.

One time the company received 20 new locomotives. Within two years 6 of them had caught on fire, because the wiring installed at the factory was an inferior wire. The wire had not been designed for the high heat these resistors created. They changed the resistors from the area where the factory had installed them to another area that wasn't so critical to heat; changed all the wiring on all 20 locomotives with a wire that would not burn. The same kind that the U.S.Navy has been using in their submarines.



In addition to these changes in procedure, Henry also started classes for his electricians. The EMD and General Electric shared in the expense for these classes. They were held in Lincoln, Denver, Kansas City, Galesburg and Aurora, Illinois, everywhere the company had shops for the maintenance of the equipment.

Henry tells this story about one locomotive, "One time, we had trouble with a new locomotive. It was always short circuiting, so my assistant and I opened the 7 foot wide panel, removed the rectifier; then robbed another locomotive of its rectifier. We had to check this engine out, by running the engine from Chicago to Billings, Montana. On the road we recorded the engine speed, the number of wheel slips per mile, checking the horse power and whatever else needed to be recorded at every mile post. We rode in the cab, (taking plenty of sandwiches, the kind of meat that wouldn't spoil too easily, and a small electric coffee maker along to be able to stay awake) all the way. When we got to Billings, we were so groggy from lack of sleep, we could hardly stand! We had been traveling 3 days and 3 nights without sleep!"

When the Chicago Burlington Quincy merged into The Great Northern Railroad (the parent company) another man who was the Electrical Engineer for Great Northern Railroad because of seniority took over this job. Henry was offered the job as General Superintendent of Electrical Engineers. (There is only one Electrical Engineer on a railroad) Henry realized he was nearing the age of retirement so he asked for a transfer. He was sent to Alliance, Nebraska, as District Master Mechanic, whose title was changed later to Assistant Superintendent of Mechanical Department. The territory included all Eastern Colorado, along with Denver, went as far south as Texas; took in Casper and Cheyenne in Wyoming; and in South Dakota and Nebraska, all of the Western sections of both states as far south as Hastings, Nebraska. With an assistant in Denver, who had an office staff of 7 or 8 people, he would make Denver, three or four times a month. In Alliance, he also had an office staff of 8 people. Travel was by car, and Henry says he wore out a car every year. Actually Henry had over 700-800 men under him at all times, in addition to the office staff.

While at Alliance, he had to oversee all serious derailments. At the scene where the cars were derailed, a detailed sketch was required as to the position of the cars at time of derailment, the numbers on the side of the car, the goods within cars, and what condition they were in, as well as overseeing the work of the men. With all the heavy derricks, and other heavy equipment required, it was necessary to see to it that no man was injured.

In 1976, an opening presented itself in Lincoln. Due to a retirement in the Lincoln area, Henry thought it would be nice to be able to retire in Lincoln. Here he got the job as Superintendent of Mechanical Department. The territory was considerable smaller, but suited Henry.

Retiring in 1977, Henry and his wife shared their retirement together. Henry can remember so many good things he and his wife did together. If he had to go out to take care of an engine that was malfunctioning, he would take Mollie and the baby, Mary Ann along, so Mollie could hold the bolts while he went around the back of the panel to tighten the bolts.

Henry lost his wife September 4, 1987. When he mentioned this, he said, "I had a wonderful life with my wife. In the Bible it says, 'a man should love his wife as much as he does himself.' That's the way it should be, and that's the way it has always been between us".

It becomes very apparent, when you are in his home, that Mollie is still the center of his life in the photos, as well as the woman's touch that remains.. Today, Henry lives by himself, keeping himself as just about as trim as he might have been when in the service. Keeping busy doing research on his family, but primarily he engages in projects that concern railroads. He has an enviable collection of old photos; of locomotives, as well as cars and cabooses which make up complete trains. On his coffee table are three trains, one is still "in the state of the art" condition, the fabled, "Los Angeles Zephyr", the most glorious of all passenger trains of that time.

**"The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it"**

**John Ruskin**

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**PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM FOR THE BRODA DINNER**

**Return with self stamped, self addressed envelope to:**

**Lois Sorensen**

**1605 S. 58th St.**

**Lincoln, Nebraska 68506**

**Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ tickets at \$7.50 each for the Broda Dinner**

**(children under 10 \$3.50 each)**

**Make checks payable to Lincoln AHSGR**



**DON'T FORGET!**  
**ANNUAL BRODA DINNER**  
**WSI HALL 1430 N. 10TH ST.**  
**LINCOLN, NEBRASKA**  
**FOR MEMBERS ONLY**  
**SEE INSIDE FOR YOUR ORDER FORM**

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