



# THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

## Lincoln Chapter

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Issue IX  
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### Chapter Officers

President - Larry Schenkel

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Membership Chairman - John Stuertz

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Newsletter - Hugh Dobler

Publicity - Dale Dinges - John Stuertz

### Scheduled Coming Events:

#### October 4, 1995 TREASURES OF THE CZARS BUS TRIP TO TOPEKA, KANSAS

7:00 A.M. return at 8:p.m. You will be stopping at Topeka for lunch plus the 2 1/2 hour tour of the museum. Cost is \$32.00 per person on a first come, first serve basis. There are a few seats remaining! Send money to "Treasures of the Czars" c/o AHSGR, 631 "D" St. Lincoln, Ne. 68502

You will meet at AHSGR Headquarters to board bus.

#### October 8, 1995 PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO JAKE SINNER

2: P.M. Open House and Dedication

AHSGR Headquarters Building

#### October 10, 1995 LLCGS (Lincoln Lancaster County Genealogical Society)

7:00 P.M.

Dick Administration Building (Lower Level) Union College Campus

#### October 16, 1995 AHSGR BOARD MEETING

7:00 P.M.

Conference Room -AHSGR Headquarters Bldg

#### October 21, 1995 PAF-LUG (Personal Ancestral File-Lincoln User's Group)

7:00 P.M.

Family Service Center 3100 Old Cheney Road

### Editor's Notes:

We feel the chapter has a wonderful treat in store for you with the coming general meeting, when we have Samuel Sinner and a few of his friends entertain us with Volga Germans songs, and quite a bit of folk lore at our September 17, meeting. You should have received a post card inviting all members who would like to hear Samuel Sinner! Don't forget that we meet at 1 p.m. for a pot luck dinner at St. Paul's United Church of Christ at 13th and "F". (And be sure to bring your own dinnerware. The drinks will be furnished.)

Last month we had a short story about Dr. Thomas Bird doing research on the incidence of Alzheimer's Disease in generations of Volga Germans. He spoke to us at the annual convention at Calgary, about these genes having been found and was doing further research on them. In this month's newsletter is a related story, that bears out what Dr. Bird had told us.

We feel privileged to have a story of a first generation United States citizen, who migrated from Russia to Lincoln, Nebraska, realizing the good life here. Next month we will have the story about one of his children. Their story became too long to put it all into one month's newsletter.

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.

"A WOMAN IS LIKE A TEABAG: YOU NEVER KNOW HOW STRONG SHE IS  
UNTIL SHE GETS INTO HOT WATER" ELEANOR ROOSEVELT



## DER JARSTAG (HAPPY ANNIVERSARY)

### Congratulations To:

October 12	Frieda and Hugh Dobler	30 Years	1965
October 15	Ruth and LeRoy Stubbs	31 Years	1964
October 17	Violet and Albert Hehn	47 Years	1948

## UNSURE LEUTE

### GEBURTSTAG (HAPPY BIRTHDAY)

October 1	Violet Hehn	October 1	Norma Somerheiser
October 4	Frieda Dobler	October 4	Conrad Gabelhaus
October 5	Ruth Amen	October 5	John Stuertz
October 6	Linda (Loos) Jansing	October 6	David Loos
October 6	Paul Loos	October 6	Jewel Hardt
October 6	Helen Burbach	October 6	Ilene Kier
October 7	Phil Kehling	October 8	James(Jim) Robertson
October 10	Gib Meier	October 11	Leah Rebensdorf
October 11	Jake Sinner	October 14	Gottlieb (Scotty) Kaufman
October 15	Lillian Giebelhaus	October 15	Lillian Loos
October 15	Katherine Oakley	October 15	Edward Wunder
October 19	Frances Amen	October 20	Alex (Bud) Deitrich
October 21	William (Bill) Zitterkopf	October 22	Henry Grasmick
October 23	Alex Miller	October 29	Anna Baker
October 30	Norma Jean (Hock) Stauffer	October 31	Esther Weber

*(Ruth Amen and John Stuertz do have something in common!- Birthdays! Then look at all the birthdays on the 6th as two brothers and a sister celebrate this day as well as several others; then on the 15th we also have in-laws celebrating (same family as the brothers and sister) plus two others To what can we attribute that phenomena!)*

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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The following was copied from the August 18, 1995 Lincoln Journal Star  
(under the section called "Nation")

### Scientists find 3rd Alzheimer's gene

Paul Recer Associated Press

Washington - A mutation found only among some German-Russian immigrants has been identified as the third gene to cause the early onset of the inherited Alzheimer's disease. Scientists say the discovery may speed development of drugs to combat the brain-destroying disorder.

Researcher's isolated the gene by probing the chromosomes of a group known as Volga Germans, who have a high incidence of Alzheimer's before the age of 65. The muted gene was found on chromosome 1 and linked directly to causing the brain disease.

Two reports on the discovery will be published Friday in Science, the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Rudolph Tanzi of Massachusetts General Hospital, a principal collaborator in the research, said the new Alzheimer's gene makes a protein that is closely related to protein produced by an Alzheimer's gene his team found earlier on chromosome 14.

This similarity, said Tanzi, puts researchers on the fast track for understanding what causes formation in the brain of amyloid-beta, a glue like substance that is toxic to brain cells and is a primary feature of Alzheimer's. He said the two proteins may have common functions even though they are produced from different genes.

Once the function of these proteins is found, he said, researchers can develop a drug to block the disease. "This is an incredibly important discovery," said Marcelle Morrison-Bogorad, a professor of neurology at the University of Texas, Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. "This means that genetics has pretty much solved the mystery of early-onset AD (Alzheimer's Disease) and it clears a path for scientific research that wasn't there before." With three Alzheimer's



genes identified, she said, researchers are free to focus on specific molecular processes. The body makes about 100,000 proteins," said Morrison-Bogorad. "Now instead of having to study 100,000, we can concentrate on the three proteins expressed(made) by these genes.

Tanzi and his team in 1987 found the first Alzheimer's gene on chromosome 21. They isolated the chromosome 14 gene last June. People who inherit one of these three rare mutations develop Alzheimer's before the age of 65 and sometimes as young as 40.

Alzheimer's is a progressive disorder that slowly disables the brain. It first erodes memory and eventually wipes out all brain function, causing death. About 4 million Americans have Alzheimer's. It is the fourth leading cause of death, killing about 400,000 annually. More than 90 percent of patients develop the disease after the age of 65 and some suggest that about half of everyone over the age of 85 is afflicted.

But it was the early onset, before age 65, that led to the discovery of a genetic cause. Researchers found the mutations by analyzing the genetic makeup of family groups in which early Alzheimer's occurred in generation after generation. The chromosome 1 gene was tracked down when scientists led by Gerard D. Schellenberg of the Seattle Veteran's Affairs Medical Center studied the genetic makeup of families descended from Germans who migrated to the Volga river area of Russia in the 18th century, and then came to the United States in this century. Early Alzheimer's is very common in this small group.

About 20 percent of early-onset Alzheimer's patients are in families with the chromosome 14 defect, Tanzi said. The chromosome 1 defect accounts for about 25 percent of such cases, and the chromosome 21 flaw for about 5 percent.

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**The only limit to our realization for tomorrow will be our doubts of today" -**

**Franklin D. Roosevelt**

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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)

## **THE HENRY BLITZ SR. FAMILY**

Henry Blitz Sr. was born in Balzer, Volga, Russia. He had two brothers and two sisters. Henry had been in the Russian army, and after his discharge decided to come to the United States. He was married to Marie Bauer with a three year old daughter, Marie.

A younger brother Jacob had immigrated to the United States and Nebraska. He had been working for the railroad, and had accumulated enough money to enable his brother Henry and family to migrate.

The town of Balzer, in which the Blitz' family lived was a manufacturing town, where there were boot factories, as well as manufacturers of cloth. Henry's family were weavers. In Balzer Henry served as an apprentice for a man who was a carpenter. This man also made his own paints (in those days you had to make your own paints, you didn't just go to a store and buy a ready made paint) for .50 cents a month.

This knowledge came in handy when Henry arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska. Henry had a friend in Lincoln, Conrad Schumacher, (who was also a contractor), building houses. The two started working together by building a house at 442 "A" St. in Lincoln. Both families lived in this home.

In 1912 Marie (Bauer) Blitz passed away, leaving two children, Marie and Pauline. With that event, the lives of the Blitz's would change.

In that same year, George and Marie Christine (Bieden) Rebensdorf, were in the process of moving to Canada from the farm they had at Harbine, Nebraska. George was killed in a train accident in Central Nebraska, leaving Marie Christine a widow with three children, Peter, Emma and Reinhold Rebensdorf. Marie Christine was from Dinkel, which is located on the east side of the Volga River, and Balzer, the village of the Blitz's was on the about 7 miles west of the same river.

Henry became acquainted with the family, as Marie Christine had relatives in Lincoln. Marie Christine and Henry knew they needed each other.

Conrad Schumacher built another home on 3rd and "A" St., and Henry then purchased the home at 442 "A" St. The family continued to live here until 1926, during which time, Henry, Lydia, Esther and Robert were born.

In 1926, Mr. Kahm, a relative of Henry offered the family another home on West "E" Street, and they moved to that residence. At this new home, Leo and Rudolph, the twins were born.

After some years at the home on West "E" Street, Henry decided to return to the old homestead, because a plumber by the name of Klein, had put in a bathroom in the lower level of the home, so now the family would have two bathrooms!



With a family of 12 children, (some of the children had already moved out, going on their own) Henry and Marie Christine decided that the family would go to the beet fields. The first year the family went to Minnesota, and the rest of the time to western Nebraska, in their new automobile.

Here the family would continue to live during the harvesting of the beet fields, while father would return to Lincoln to take care of his contracting business, returning in the fall, to pick up his family.

On arrival home, Henry would go to the H.J. Amen Grocery and purchase food for the winter. Ten- hundred pound bags of potatoes, which they would store in the basement on racks so air would circulate, Ten or twelve- hundred pound sacks of flour, with at least two of them had to be rye flour. These were put into two large bins that Henry had constructed of tongue and groove flooring, lined with zinc (zinc is malleable and could be formed inside the bin), with a lid on hinges.

The kitchen was a large room, where the entire family ate. In the kitchen was a combination coal gas and coal stove. This coal gas was the forerunner of the natural gas we have today and derived from burning coal at a large commercial plant near 1st and "O" Street. This commodity was piped into homes throughout Lincoln, (after the advent of Natural Gas, all the people had to do was convert the jets). The burning of coal created by-products: Creosote which Henry used to dip the shingles in before putting them on the houses which he and Schumacher were building, and ashes were strewn on the roads during the winter months (before the advent of salt for roads), to keep them from being slippery, as well as being used as a base for walkways (there were no concrete sidewalks in those days).

In addition to the kitchen on the first floor, an additional kitchen was in the basement, which was used extensively in the summer months, as it would be at least 15 degrees cooler there than in the main kitchen. During the summer months, when most canning took place, this is where a lot of the canning was done.

(Some of Henry's Jr.'s most cherished memories are the large loaves of rye bread that mother made. When they came out of the oven, the loafs were as large as the oven itself, and Henry still says that he has never tasted rye bread as good as what his mother made).

In addition, there would also be 150 pounds of cabbage, that was made into sauerkraut, as well as the apples and watermelons (pickle the rinds), pears etc., which Henry's wife canned. Henry Sr. would also buy a hog, and a half-a-beef, which they would make into sausages and bacon. With a smoke house in the back yard, they could have smoked sausage and bacon as well.. All of the meat would be sauted, until the fat from the pork would run, then the beef and pork pieces ("no such thing as a steak, it was just a piece of meat", Henry Jr. says) were put into crocks, with the melted lard surrounding the meats. This would keep the meat until spring.

Henry bought everything by the case. One of the items Henry Jr. remembers best are the salamis. He would cut a chunk and put into his pocket, to chew on while he was working.

The Blitz family had a Christian ritual to begin each day. As soon as everyone had come down in the morning, either mother or father would begin by reading a couple of passages from the Bible; then a song would be sung, usually "Gott ist die Liebe" or "So nem den meine Hinde", after which the family would gather around the table and each one would say a prayer. They could then begin to eat, but there was to be no laughing or talking, or Henry Sr. would say, " Don't laugh at the table. Only monkeys do that!" From there the family could do whatever they wished, as long as they were responsible for their actions.

All members of the family had good jobs.

Each of the family members were married, except three. The exceptions were the twins, Leo and Rudolph, ,and Pauline.

The children in order of birth were:

Marie Blitz married Paul Fitzer, who became the supervisor for American Sugar Co. In Napo, Idaho. They had one boy, Paul Jr.

Peter Rebensdorf married Rachel Reinhardt. He served in the Army as a guard in Washington DC for 9 years. He received a medical discharge from the service, came back to Lincoln, and worked for the railroad.

Emma Rebensdorf married Peter Rietz. They had three children, an adopted boy, Wayne, Linda and George.

Pauline, Blitz , contracted Polio as a young girl, and died soon after World War. II

Reinhold (Reinie) Rebensdorf, the oldest became a Chef. During World War II, he was with the Seabees at Pearl Harbor, where he became one of the head men in preparation of food at the base. Later he worked at the Hotel Cornhusker, Lincoln. While working at the Cornhusker he received the highest award any chef could ever receive. He won the prestigious award of Chef of the Year for the United States. Reinie passed away this past year.

Henry Jr. married Mollie Walter. They had one daughter, Mary Ann. Mary Ann married Steve Gorka, Jr. and now live in Columbus, Ohio, where Steve is the Postmaster at Defiance, Ohio. They have four children, Michael 17, David 14, Stephanie 11, and Katherine(Katie) 7.



Lydia Blitz married Harold Powell, who went into the Navy, where he became a Lieutenant. They have four children, Ernest, James, Michael and Mary.

Esther Blitz married Harold Shannon, while both were working for Gooch Mills in Lincoln. Harold then attended a bakery school, and ended up in New York City becoming the manager of the American Tea Co. They have three girls, twin girls, and another daughter.

Leo and Rudolph Blitz, the twins, enlisted in the Navy when they were 17, so they could learn a trade. They were aboard the USS Oklahoma when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 17, 1941. They had enlisted for 4 years, and would have been discharged under normal circumstances within six months.

Betty Blitz married Richard Pitsch. Richard became a surgical physician, practicing in Seward, Nebraska, where he established his own clinic. Dr. Pitsch retired this past July. They had two boys and two girls.

Robert Blitz married a girl from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Louise Maschetti. They have four children, Marie, Christine, Susan and Henry.

Henry Sr. passed away in 1964.

Marie Christine died in 1974

Henry Jr. remarked that of the four boys who carried the name of Blitz, none of the boys had any male descendants. Therefore the Blitz name will be lost to all the future generations of Henry Blitz Sr.

(There were two Blitz boys who married, the rest of the boys in the family were Rebensdorf's)

"I shall pass this way but once;  
any good, therefore, that I can do  
or any kindness that I can show to any human being,  
let me do it now.  
let me not defer nor neglect it,  
for I shall not pass this way again."

**GENERAL MEETING  
ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHRIST OF CHRIST  
13TH AND 'F' ST  
SEPTEMBER 17, 1995  
SAMUEL SINNER AND FRIENDS  
1:00 PM POT LUCK DINNER  
(BRING YOUR OWN DINNERWARE  
DRINKS WILL BE FURNISHED)**

68-01-8

American Historical Society  
of Germans From Russia  
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