THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

LINCOLN CHAPTER

VOLUME IV **DECEMBER 1996** **ISSUE XII**

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December 1, 1996 Lincoln Chapter Christmas Singfest
Faith United Church 901 Charleston St.
2:00 P.M.

December 10, 1996 LLCGS (Lincoln Lancaster County Genealogical Society)
Dick Administration Building (Lower Level) Union College Campus
7:00 p.m.

December 21, 1996 PAF-LUG (Personal Ancestral File-Lincoln Users Group)
Family Service Center 3100 Old Cheney Road
7:00 p.m.

December 21, 1996 AHSGR Board Meeting and Christmas Party
Henry Sader Home (Wilderness Kennels)
6:00 p.m.
(Letter will be sent later from John Stuertz giving directions to the home)

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE

Editor's Notes:

In previous Newsletters I have mentioned my three year term as a member of the local board is coming to an end this December. Therefore, the last Newsletter emanating from this computer will come to an end with the January issue.

The chapter is in luck as we have a new editor for the monthly letter. Annie Lutz Settell has agreed to become the new editor. Bob and Annie Settell have owned Settell's Printing, a printing shop, here in Lincoln for many years, and with that background you will have a quality newsletter in the future.

John Fischer, one of the old faithful at AHSGR Headquarters, had a heart warming article in the *Burlington Bulletin* recently. I was able to obtain permission to reprint this article. Due to the length, it will need to be printed in two installments.

Executive Directors Note:

The Headquarter's Staff and I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your many hours of volunteer service, donations, and support of AHSGR. Special thanks to John Schneider, Frances Amen, Hugh Dobler, Norma Somerheiser, Anna Baker, Ed Herstein, Irene Dinges, Al Kruse, Ruth Kruse, Lois Sorensen, Delores Schwartz, and Lillian Weber.

We all need to thank Kathleen Svoboda and Norma Somerheiser for their special contribution to AHSGR. Kathleen and Norma have been going to the Lincoln Public Schools to give presentations on the history of German Russians. Thank you Kathleen and Norma!

Best wishes to you and your families for a Happy Holiday Season!

Kathy Schultz, Executive Director

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You probably have heard this one, but I'll tell it anyway!

Bill Gates was driving to the airport, too fast as usual, and crashed his Lexus, dying immediately. Gabriel met him at the Pearly Gates with a clipboard. "Bill," he said, "you have a mixed record. I'm going to let you decide whether you want heaven or hell."

"Are you crazy" Bill asked, forgetting his millions didn't get him anywhere else.

'"No not at all," Gabriel said. First he took Bill Gates to Hell. While it was quite warm and sunny, Hell was situated on a beautiful ocean with turquoise water. Women in bikinis were lolling on beach blankets. Everyone was laughing and talking, having a great time. Cocktail waitresses went around to the individual blankets and took orders for the drinks. People were snorkeling, drinking and sunning. Bill had to admit it didn't look half bad.

Next Gabriel took Bill up to Heaven. It was very cloudy and the fog was thick, as it is in San Francisco. Many serious looking people were there, dressed for church. Some were strumming harps. Others read prayer books. Gabriel assured Bill Gates he would get used to sitting on the damp clouds and that church services for every denomination were held around the clock. After a few centuries, he might even get to use one of the harps, which were in high demand.

But Bill couldn't get Hell out of his mind and decided to go there. Six months later, Gabriel went to visit him and asked him how he was doing. Bill was shackled to an iron pole while roaring flames licked his entire body. He was writhing and screaming, all to no avail. In anguish he shouted to Gabriel, "This isn't what you showed me!"

"But Bill, "Gabriel said, "that was the demo."..

Republished from *NEUES LEBEN* of December 20, 1990

This weekly newspaper was published in Moscow and distributed throughout Eastern Germany during the Russian occupation, as well as other, German speaking communities around the world. For many years it was a 15 page newspaper written completely in German. In the last few years, finding that many of the younger people within East Germany, were no longer able to read German, the newspaper began to write in both Russian and German. It, on the whole, was still mainly a German newspaper.

Joseph MOHR
(1792–1848)

Stille Nacht

1. Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

2. Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Hirten erst kund gemacht;
durch der Engel Halleluja
tönt es laut von fern und nah:
Christ, der Retter ist da!
Christ, der Retter ist da!

3. Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb' aus seinem göttlichen Mund,
da uns schlägt die rettende Stund',
Christ, in deiner Geburt!
Christ, in deiner Geburt!

UNSER LEUTE

DER JAHRSTAG (HAPPY ANNIVERSARY)

* * *

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

December 21, 1957	Esther and Melvin Rohleder	39 years
December 31, 1934	Clara and Edward Deines	63 years

GLUCKWUNSCHE (HAPPY BIRTHDAY)

December 1 Hilde Schwabauer
December 2 Katherine Strasheim
December 5 Wilbur Amen
December 2 Marie Rejcha
December 4 Henry H. Grasmick
December 7 Ray Becker
December 9 Dorothy Gruenemeier
December 11 Ruth Kruse
December 14 Dennis Fiedler
December 14 Edward Deines
December 15 Alex Schwabauer
December 18 Irwin Ulmer
December 23 Samuel Sinner
December 23 Gerald Schleich
December 26 Gerald Grauer
December 28 Irene Dinges
December 29 Rose Mandeville
December 31 Darlene Bauer
December 31 Clara Deines

Reminiscences of a Q Locomotive Painter

Recollections of John Fischer, Lincoln, Nebraska, as told to Al Holck in the *Burlington Bulletin*

I started working at the Lincoln Roundhouse on August 4, 1926. I was 17 years old but had given my age as 18. Prior to that I worked at John Lessman's Roundhouse Cafe. The most memorable character I met there was a Creston Division engineer who ran into Lincoln on a regular basis. This particular time, I took his order and went back into the kitchen to cook it. When I brought it out to him, I noticed what looked like sugar on the counter. He had a large envelope in his hand and I said, "What have you got there?" He replied, "This is white sand; I'm sending in a sample to the superintendent." He paid his bill and left.

Frank Gilmore, conductor on the Columbus local, who had been sitting next to him, started laughing. "Don't you know the difference between white sand and sugar? He emptied your sugar bowl!" I said, "Boy, that's a good one on me!" Then I started watching him.

Guys in the roundhouse would tell me he would go through there and pass out cigars. One day I put out a full box of Charles Denby cigars. By this time, John Lessman, had put up a mirror on the south wall so I could watch him. When he finished his meal, and came up to the counter to pay, I watched him take a bunch of cigars. I waited until he was done, then I came out and started to punch his meal ticket.
"Hey, wait a minute", he fumed. "What are you doing? Your punching out too much money".
"Is that sandwich all you had?" I said.
"That's all I had."
I opened the cigar box and said, "You took 17 cigars. John is giving me hell because these cigars are not registering on the cash register. Today, you are going to pay for them. I watched you put them in your pocket."

He left without a word. Next trip, he came in. "Hi, Johnny," he said, like nothing ever happened. The special agent caught him long after I left the beanery.

Roundhouse laborer

At the roundhouse, my hours were 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., with an hour for lunch. I was paid 35 cents an hour. My first job was painting front ends and fireboxes. I did it the hard way, using a two gallon bucket in which I mixed graphite with a little water. Then I put the mixture on with a sponge. If there were rusty spots, they would first have to be painted with black locomotive paint while the engine was still hot. It was in order that the black oil base paint would be dry before I came along with the water base graphite paint. Wet graphite wouldn't stick to the wet oil base paint.

My first check from the Burlington was for $45.60. When I got home, my dad said, "Where's your check?' "I cashed it."

"That will be the last check you cash! So I turned over my check, until I was 20 years old. After that, I paid $30.00 a month board.

We lived in a little four room house with two bedrooms, a kitchen with a coal fired stove, and a kind of living room which had a round belly stove. I had eight brothers and five sisters. In one bedroom there were three beds. The younger ones slept three to a bed. The two oldest girls slept in the kitchen on a leather couch. My brother Dan and I slept in the living room on a leather couch that opened up into a bed, like the one in the kitchen. We had straw sacks to sleep on. My mother would make the bags out of Gooch's mill flour sacks.

I painted front ends and fireboxes for about six months and then ran the turntable for about a year. After four years, my wages went up a little bit. One night, about two in the morning, while I was running the turntable, one of the men who washed engines tried to move a switcher. He opened the *throttle and got as far as the walk between 1 stall and 43 stall when he got off because he got scared.* The engine continued backing, and the tender fell in the turntable pit. They had to get a wrecker to get it out. I was in the 27 stall, and taking out No. 70's engine, and had the turntable lined for that.

On those occasions, when the turntable was out of order, the hostlers would take the engines *from the cinder pit to the wye at K Street to turn them around.*

After that, I worked nights in the can house for about eight or nine years. The hostler would bring outbounds out to the water crane, and then I would take over. I had to put all the tools on all outgoing engines. In those days, the engineer had his own bucket, hand oiler, supply can and tool box, all numbered. All the engines had to have cinder hooks, bull chains, blocking wedges, packing hooks, packing knife and other tools.

I also took care of seven switch engines on 4 track. They came in at midnight. I cleaned the fires, filled the tenders and herded them until they went to work, starting about 6 o'clock until 7:00. About 1935 or 1936, I got a day job at the can house, taking care of the same sorts of things. This was a pretty good sized job. I also had to wipe jackets. Then they pulled off the laborer's job on the cinder pit, and I had to do that to. It was a very undesirable job.

One afternoon, Tom Paradise, who was a master mechanic at the time, came down to talk to me. It was hot!! The sweat was running off of me. I was shoveling out the cinders remaining in the pit after the buckets were lifted out and emptied into the cinder car. Tom asked," John how come you don't wipe the jackets anymore"? I said, "Mr. Paradise, they pulled this job, so now I've got to do it in the afternoon, and I don't have time to clean the jackets".

"Well I don't think so either. I didn't know they had pulled this job off", he replied He went into the roundhouse and talked to Cliff Bloom, the general foreman, and Bill Denham, the labor foreman, and soon five or six laborers came out to help.

The foreman had the authority to pull off any jobs and then tell the master mechanic. They could get credit for pulling off jobs because they were saving money for the company
In the late 1930's, we had the streamlined steam engines. They came in mostly at night on the fast trains when the diesel had broken down. At those times, when the steam engine ran through without a change, I'd have to go down to the depot and clean the fire. The ashes were dumped right down on the ties and another laborer removed them.

The hostler sanded the engines. Before the new steel coal chute was built in 1917, the sanding was done at the old wooden chute. That chute had a ramp that the coal cars were pulled up with a cable and dumped into the bins. After the new chute was built, the coal cars were moved over the pit and emptied. From the pit, the coal was hoisted on a conveyor to the top of the chute. All the unloading was handled by laborers, usually the youngest because no one wanted the job. It was hard work and dirty. The new sand tower was built near the can house and water crane.

At that time there were about 20 or 21 trains on the night shift (midnight to 8:00 a.m. at that time). We had Nos. 6 and 9 (the east and westbound *Aristocrat*), 31 (the Columbus local), 43 (the *Adventureland)47, (* the Aurora local), 70 (freight for Chicago), 71 (Hastings local), 79 (freight to Hastings), 80-(freight to Kansas City, usually double headed), 92 (freight to Ferry), 93 (freight to Wymore), 118 (freight to Table Rock) and 136 (the Nebraska City local.). There may have been some others that I can't remember. There were also extra freights as needed. Some of the numbered trains don't appear in the employee's timetables. The numbers were informal, and the train operated as extras.

Some of the hostlers came off the fireman's seniority list. They were usually the youngest firemen, who didn't have enough seniority to hold a road job on the extra board. We did have some men that were regular hostlers. There was a cinder pit hostler on each shift: George Froscheiser had the day shift, Pete Damm was there from 4:00 p.m. to midnight and Ralph Parra, midnight to 8:00 a.m. There were three hostlers at the coal chute: Charlie Stauffer from 8 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Martin Roh from 4 p.m. to midnight and a fireman from the extra board after midnight.

I hadn't been on the day job at the can house too long when the wheat business started to pick up. A hostler helper job came open on the cinder pit. This consisted of knocking fires, and I did it for about six months. About that time -1937- the new power house was built, so I bid the laborer's job there. There were three boilers of about 250 pounds pressure. Two were in regular service use and one was kept on standby. A steam line ran directly to the 43 stalls. The boiler room used three firemen, one on each shift. This was a class A job and paid about 75 cents per hour. As the laborer I got about 40 cents an hour.

The boilers used about one car of coal a day, or 55 tons. It took me about two and one half hours to empty this car and elevate the coal to the bins on the top floor. The engine room next to the boiler room had two air compressors to furnish air to the round house, rip track and yard. Where as the old power house had three boilers which had come from the old steam engines, the new house had modern boilers.

I was on that job a couple of years as a laborer. Then I bid the fire-builder's job in the roundhouse and did that for about a year. So I had most of the laborer's jobs- different jobs, good job- because I was second oldest man and could hold the jobs I bid in. Those were tough years during the Depression. While I was a fire-builder, I also had to do the cleaning for the painter, wash tenders and clean boiler jackets with mineral spirits. We used a little soap and water on the tenders and rinsed them off. I had to wash the running gear, spraying first with a solution of what we called Actisol, mixed with mineral spirits. This got most of the grease off. This was done inside the roundhouse. At the outside wash rack, a hot water, steam, and fuel oil mixture was used.

A lot of times during the early years of the Depression, if they needed a machinist's helper, boilers maker's helper or pipe fitter's helper in the summer during the rush season, they always used me. I'd have to work one day a month, however, as a laborer to maintain my seniority as a laborer. Then I'd return to the helper's job. After I had worked as a boilermaker's helper for a while, I was asked by Jack Young, the day boiler foreman, if I would like to be a full-time helper. I said I didn't want it, but I did get good experience in every one of those crafts.

Servicing Steam Locomotives

Perhaps I should explain the process of servicing an engine. The engine crews would spot their incoming engine at the coal chute. The hostler would take over and fill the tender with coal. Then he would run the engine down to the cinder pit and knock the fire (we would dump the entire fire). From there, he moved it a short distance to the wash rack and cleaned the running gear with a mixture of fuel oil, hot water and steam. Then the engine was taken to the roundhouse. There was enough steam in the boiler to do all this.

Ninety-nine percent of the engines had the fire dropped. The exception was the group of switchers that worked the various jobs. They were serviced outside, and the fire was banked until the engine went to work. Occasionally an engine was needed for an emergency, and it would be serviced outside.

Before a boilermaker could enter the firebox to check for leaking flues and staybolts, a boilermaker's helper would clean out the cinders and ash. When I was a boilermaker's helper on the daytime shift, I'd have to crawl into the firebox and clean out the cinders and ash caked like clinkers about a foot deep on the arch brick and against the flues and tubes. I'd climb over the arch and knock the clinker loose with a coal pick. Superheater units were often wedged into the flues. You'd have to run in a pipe with air pressure to loosen the cinders surrounding them. All this clinker was shoveled over the arch onto the grates. I wasn't allowed to dump it in the roundhouse pit. Instead, I would shovel it out the firebox door unto the cab deck. Some of the stuff was red hot. I wasn't allowed to put the blower on full to pull some cool air through the firebox. After that, I'd shovel it down on the floor of the roundhouse, get a wheelbarrow, load it up, and take it outside. At that time, there was a pit about 15 feet deep outside the drop pit and behind Lessman's cafe. That's where I'd haul the cinders.

After I cleaned out the firebox, the boilermaker would go in with an air hammer and peen over any tubes or flues that were leaking. If that didn't stop the leaks, they would have to drain the boiler and weld them. Later on, when new tubes or flues were put in, they would be welded. The boilermaker would also open the front end, clean out the cinders and inspect it. Boilers were washed out whenever an engineer reported a dirty boiler. Of course they were routinely washed on monthly inspections. When an engine was called far a run, it was necessary to start a fire. Before 1937, when a direct steaming plant was built, it was necessary to start the fire while the engine was still in the roundhouse. We had a wheel barrow full of wood shavings into which we dumped a 5 gallon pail of black oil. This was shoveled up onto the cab deck. You would already have put a bed of coals about 5 inches thick in the firebox. The shavings went in on top of this. Then you took a piece of waste soaked with oil, lit it and threw it into the firebox. If there was enough steam left in the boiler, the blower was turned on to get some draft. There were two fire builders, one for stall 1-22, another for stall 23-43. About 60 pounds of steam pressure was needed to back the engine out. It was necessary to put enough compressed air into the air tank so you had some brakes.

After direct steaming came in, you still built a bed of coal on the grates. At the same time, steam and hot water were being fed into the boiler until you had about 150 pounds pressure. Then you backed the engine out. With direct steaming, you could raise the pressure to the point that the safety valves would pop. After the engine was spotted at the water crane, the fire - builder would start the fire using an oil or gas fired nozzle While the fire got going, you filled the tender with water, checked all the tools which were required, made sure there was an oil can aboard and there was a supply of valve oil and stuff like that.

Inspections and Repairs

If an engine came in for one of the regular inspections (monthly, one year, or five year) the water was drained from both the tender and the boiler, otherwise it was left in. When the boiler was refilled, you used hot water, and with direct steaming, it took about 30-35 minutes to raise enough steam to move the engine.

A lot of work was done during monthly inspections. Bearings on sides and main rods were checked, cylinder packing replaced as needed, other running gear repairs made, new arch brick installed, grates inspected, leaking flues repaired, broken staybolts replaced, anything needing attention in the cab handled, the wheels on the tender checked, injectors and boiler checks cleaned with muriatic acid, etc. The jacket or the running gear might need painting, and some or all of the numbers on the cab might need renewal.

There was a lot of asbestos used on a steam locomotive. For a five year inspection, for example, the pipe fitters removed the boiled jacket, then the asbestos logging came off. It was two inches thick. The boiler and the inside of the cab would be washed off and the boiler filled with water. Using compressed air, the boiler pressure would be raised to 200 pounds and then the staybolts checked for leaks. New staybolts were put in where needed. They also checked for other leaks. When the inspection was finished, they would restore the asbestos. The asbestos used on the back head, the firebox and the combustion chamber was mixed in a large pan and then plastered on. Between the combustion chamber and the smokebox, they used asbestos blocks, approximately 6 x 24 inches thick. Baling wire was looped around the boiler to hold them in place. Then the jacket was put back on. If air pumps had to be replaced, there were spare ones on hand. The defective ones were sent to West Burlington for repair.

A big roundhouse like Lincoln had a number of foremen. At the top was a master mechanic. Then there was a day and night general foreman, day and night roundhouse foreman, day and night labor foreman who also ran the wrecker. The rest of the wrecker crew were all car men under the supervision of the general car foreman. We also had a daytime machine shop foreman.

The foremen at the outlying roundhouses such as Hastings, Ravenna, Fairmont, Aurora, Burwell, Palmer and Sargent all reported to the Lincoln master mechanic. As a result of cutbacks during the Depression and later reorganization, supervisors at Omaha, Ferry, and Wymore also reported to Lincoln. There was a guy we called a grease monkey. He greased the rods. There was also a truck packer who put waste and oil in journal boxes on the tender trucks. We also had a boiler washer, and he had a helper. There was an electrician and a carpenter. The day shift had many more than the night. During my early years there were about five or six machinists and helpers on the night shift.

Nothing was done on the drop pit after midnight. Sometimes the guys on the day shift worked overtime as late as 9 p.m. to get the running gear and rods up on an engine. The running gear consisted of pilot wheels, drivers, cylinders, trailing truck and tender trucks. When I got to be a painter on the day shift I worked overtime too, standing around watching the engine get done so I could paint the running gear.

All kinds of repairs were made. We had a switcher ready to go out when it was discovered it had slipped a tire. Another time, the engine for No. 41 had a broken part in the valve gear link, so a replacement was needed.

Locomotive Painter

In the early 1930's they had used me to whitewash the roundhouse. The radiators were blackened with lamp black. The inside walls below the windows were boxcar red. I'd get 10 stalls whitewashed, and then do the painting. Never was stopped by a painter. They'd just say, "Old John is getting along good, let him do the painting." One time I whitewashed up to 37 stall and made out my time slips for painter's pay (.88 cents per hour). Ben Meligan, the roundhouse foreman, came to me with my timeslips ans said they couldn't pay me painter's pay. I'd have to make pay slips for laborer pay (about 38 cents per hour). I was pretty burned up about it. I still had 37 to 43 stall to do, so I really took my time.

About 1937, the regular locomotive painter got sick, and the fellow who did the boxcar painting on the rip track didn't want the job just temporarily, so I got it. The first engine I painted was the 2804 [an S-I -A -Pacific]. The regular painter knew how to put the numbers and monograms on the engine and tender, but I didn't. I went over and got Rod Thompson, who was the top painter on the rip track. He didn't know anything about them, but he came over. We cut holes in the Burlington Route monogram so it would fit over the rivets on the tender. We ruined the first one. After we looked at the instructions, we got the next one right. After that, I didn't have any problem. So I went on painting on a temporary basis about 1939 or 1940 and became a regular painter in 1943.

The front end and firebox would always be painted with a graphite solution called StayBrite after an engine came out of the shop. After that, it depended on how they looked, but they were always kept clean. Passenger engines had the front end and the firebox after nearly every trip so from the distance they'd look real good. The jacket was polished, and two men would wash the tender. There was also a cab cleaner who cleaned the cab windows. Later on, these jobs were pulled off, so during the last two or three years of steam operation, the engines weren't so clean.

We would also give engines a "necktie" This meant going over the front end, the cylinders, all around the pilot, and repainting the the number plate if it was bad. The boss would come around and say, "John I want a necktie". Or he might say the running gear looks bad or the jacket needs painting. Sometimes the numbers would get washed off by the hot water and steam used in cleaning the engine. If the engine had bad numbers that you couldn't see, I'd go out and put new numbers on. I used a sponge and water to remove the backing from the decals. Then I ran a quick-dry varnish on the back of the decal and put it on. If the numbers and monograms were pretty good I'd give them a coat of varnish.

During the time we had a full 43 stall roundhouse, the steam locomotives that I painted were painted right in the stall where the hostler had put them. I had a little paint shop just outside the locker room (just outside 8 stall). After the roundhouse was reduced to 15 stalls in 1959, my paint shop was in stalls 13,14 and 15. I had an office in 15 stall where I kept my paint equipment, stencils, all my work equipment. I stripped and removed paint from the diesels in 13 stall, and the painting was done in 14 stall.

One time, I had just finished painting one of the big engines, the 3003,I think [an S-4-A-Hudson]. I painted it in one day-the boiler, the tender, the red roof on the cab-but I didn't have any numbers or monograms on it. A salesman from the 3M (manufacturer of the decal numbers and monograms and later of the reflective Scotchlite material used for monograms and warning stripes) was there and asked if I had any problems putting on the lettering and monograms. He asked, " how long did it take you to paint the engine"?

I replied, "How long do you think it took me"?

"Well, about two weeks."

"Two weeks! I started this morning at 8 o'clock and I just finished."

He couldn't believe it.

(To be continued next month)

O du fröhliche

Johannes David FALK
(1786—1826)

1. O du fröhliche, o du selige,
gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit!
Welt ging verloren,
Christ ist geboren:
freue, freue dich, o Christenheit!

2. O du fröhliche, o du selige,
gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit!
Christ ist erschienen,
uns zu versühnen,
freue, freue dich, o Christenheit!

3. O du fröhliche, o du selige,
gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit!
Himmlische Heere
jauchzen dir Ehre,
freue, freue dich, o Christenheit!

SING THIS SONG AND MANY OTHERS AT THE LINCOLN AHSGR SINGFEST ON DECEMBER 1, 1996
2:00 P.M.

AT FAITH UNITED C. C. CHURCH 901 CHARLESTON ST.

American Historical Society
of Germans From Russia
631 D Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68502-1199

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