



Lincoln Chapter
The American Historical Society of Germans From Russia
NEWSLETTER

VOLUME XXII, ISSUE 4

July/August, 2013

This & That from Larry...

As I searched for things to put in this newsletter, I came across an article in the May-June Newsletter of the Intermountain Chapter in Utah. It was entitled "Information regarding the Village of Balzer" provided by Darrell Weber (AHSGR Village Coordinator-Balzer, Russia). I felt this was something that would be interesting to all of you.

As I read the article about Balzer, I began to remember Ed Klein, one of the members who met on Saturday mornings at the Heritage Center. Ed would always announce his arrival by yelling "Die Balzer Leute sind here." Over the years Ed gave much of himself to AHSGR. Ed loved his German-Russian ancestry and wanted the story to be saved so future genera-

tions would be able to learn about these remarkable people.

In the past I have mentioned the group that got together on Saturday mornings at the Heritage Center. My plan is to write about one or two of them in the future newsletters and let you know of the time and talents they gave AHSGR.

History of the Village Balzer

provided by Darrell Weber

The village of Balzer is located about eight miles from the Volga River and about sixty miles from the Russian provincial city of Saratov. The tract of land allotted to Balzer by the Russian government was 18,000 acres, which included forest, town lots, gardens and threshing floors. Balzer became one of the largest settlements of the Volga Germans and became the commercial center for the villages on the west side of the river. The Russian name for the village was Goloi-Karamisch. The first Burgermeister (Mayor) was Balzer Barthuly and the village was named after him. He was among the first nine families that arrived on 28 August 1765. The Huttenteich creek passed through the southern part of Balzer and it was on its banks that the families survived the first winter by living in dugouts.

Additional groups of colonist arrived for the next two years with the last group arriving 18 August 1767. The size of Balzer consisted of 377 persons, 198 men and 179 women. A large number of the original Balzer set-

tlers came from Hesse-Darmstadt. Many came from Budingén and were subjects of the count of Isenburg. Other villages in Hesse included Alt Wiedermus, Diebach, Dudelsheim, Lorbach, Offenbach and Rohrbach.

The dominant church in Balzer was Evangelical Reformed, with Lutheran being the other major denomination. The early church buildings were built from logs in 1777 and 1821. In 1849 a large church was built from hand formed bricks and was an impressive building. Of the 90 original families, 60 belonged to the Reformed Church and 30 to the Lutheran Church.

Balzer, as a commercial center, included numerous flour and grist mills. There were 30 tanneries that handled about 10,000 hides per year. The textile industry was the most prominent and involved thousands of handlooms in the homes. It is estimated that over 5 million meters of textiles (Sarpinka) were shipped to domestic and foreign markets.

Balzer is bordered on the north by Beideck (10.4 miles), on the west by

Kutter (7.3 miles), on the south by Moor (4.2 miles), and on the east by Anton (7.3 miles). Balzer grew as a village and contained over 11,000 individuals by 1900.

When the Russianizing process began in 1874, the colonist sent representative to America to see what possibilities existed for emigration. Emigration to the US started in 1875 and increased by 1900. Many immigrated to Lincoln, NE and other parts of the US and some to Winnipeg, Canada.

The Volga Germans who remained Balzer had some tough times after the communists took over. There was a serious famine in 1920-1921 in which many lost their lives. In 1941 when Germany attacked Russia, Stalin had all the Volga Germans transported to areas of Siberia such as Kazakhstan. Today Balzer (Goloi-Karamisch) still exists but the number of Volga Germans living in the city is limited.

[continued on page 2]



History of the Village Balzer...continued from page 1

Personal visit to the village of Balzer in 2000

In 2000 we (my Wife and I) had a chance to visit Balzer. We did not go as a tour group but just the two of us. It took 2 to 3 months to get a visa. First we had to get a letter from the people in Russia, and then we needed to get it approved by one of the government offices in Russia. Then they sent the invitation letter to us. Next we sent them our passports, visa applications and letter of invitation by fast mail to the consulate in San Francisco. We did pay extra to have it expedited. We did receive the visa about 5 days before we left on the trip.

Our travel guidebooks did not recommend flying on Russian airlines so we decided to use what they call the "open jaw" air trip. We flew on Delta Airlines to St. Petersburg, visited a research institute for a week and then traveled by train to Moscow. We planned to travel by train to Saratov but the train ticket place in St. Petersburg had a line of 25 people and then they shut down the ticket computer. We did not get our tickets so we flew to Moscow. Then we learned that they have five airports in Moscow. It cost us \$40 to get to the airport that flies to Saratov.

We arrived in Saratov in the evening at 10:00pm. The first challenge was to get to Hotel Volga. Hardly anyone spoke English, but we managed to tell a taxi man that we needed to go to the Hotel Volga. We obtained a room and rested for the night. The next morning we went to find a taxi to take us to Balzer. We found a taxi but as I told him that we needed to go to Balzer, he only gave me a blank look. Finally it dawned on me that I needed to use a Russian name, Goloi-Faramisch. His face lit up and he said he would take us there for a price, which was not too bad. So off we went, headed for Balzer.

As we drove through the farm country, I was impressed at how good the crops looked. It was early summer and the wheat and hay were growing vigorously. I must admit that I had a preconceived concept of a poor cropland.

Every 10 or 20 miles we were stopped by police and our taxi driver would tell them, in Russian, that we were going to see our grandfather's village. The taxi man was effective in getting us to the town of Balzer.

A large Lutheran church used to be in the center area but it has been torn down and city buildings now exist. The city buildings are large and impressive. We also drove past a number of

homes that were built by the Volga Germans. These homes often had shutters by the windows or painted trim around the windows. We saw nice gardens in the back of the homes.

We went to an office for the village and they pulled out names similar to our ancestors that lived in the village today. We recorded the names but decided not to visit them because we did not know the language.

We stopped at one place and watched a funeral procession. Apparently it is common to put the casket on the bed of a truck and then have the members of the funeral party walk behind.

We also went to a German Russian museum in the village. The woman in charge was happy to see us and showed us many photos of buildings and groups of Volga Germans. They also had a German Loom in the museum.

Next we drove over to see Moor, down towards the Volga River, to see Anton and then to the Volga River. The Volga is partly dammed at this place and looks like a reservoir. Still it was a good feeling to see the Volga and stand on its shore.

We were pleased that we were able to visit Balzer and the Volga area.

2013 Calendar of Events

July 7-13	.....International Convention	.....Ft. Collins, CO
July 9	.....Coffee Club	.....9:00 a.m. ....Stauffer's .....48th & Hwy. 2
July 15	.....Board Meeting	.....7:00 p.m. ....631 D Street
August 13	.....Coffee Club	.....9:00 a.m. ....Stauffer's .....48th & Hwy. 2
August 19	.....Board Meeting	.....7:00 p.m. ....631 D Street
September 10	.....Coffee Club	.....9:00 a.m. ....Stauffer's .....48th & Hwy. 2
September 16	.....Board Meeting	.....7:00 p.m. ....631 D Street
September 22	.....General Membership Meeting & Picnic	.....4:00 p.m. ....Antelope Park Shelter
October 8	.....Coffee Club	.....9:00 a.m. ....Stauffer's .....48th & Hwy. 2
October 21	.....Board Meeting	.....7:00 p.m. ....631 D Street
November 1	.....Broda Dinner	.....5:00-7:00 p.m. ...WSI Hall .....1430 N. 10th Street
November 12	.....Coffee Club	.....9:00 a.m. ....Stauffer's .....48th & Hwy. 2
November 18	.....Board Meeting	.....7:00 p.m. ....631 D Street
December 10	.....Coffee Club	.....9:00 a.m. ....Stauffer's .....48th & Hwy. 2
December 16	.....Board Members' Christmas Dinner	.....Dino's Eastside Grill
January 12, 2014	.....Annual Membership & Business Meeting	.....1:00 p.m. ....Immanuel Church .10th & Charleston
	.....(Fellowship Hall, Potluck Dinner & Election of Officers)	



Upcoming Events – A Friendly Reminder

AHSGR Annual Convention
July 7-14, 2013
Fort Collins, CO

North Bottoms Annual Reunion
August 30, 2013
CSI Hall, 1430 N. 10th St. Lincoln, NE
Send check for \$10 to:
Ken Glantz
P.O. Box 2
Murdock, NE 68407

Ken's email address is: route66@windstream.net

Convention 2014

The Lincoln Chapter will be hosting the 2014 Convention on July 6-12 at the Cornhusker Hotel. Many things need to be done and committees are being formed to handle the different areas, such as tours, banquet menus, vendors, hospitality room hosts, registration desk workers, etc. We need your help to make it a success. The more plans that are made early the fewer emergencies we will run into.

If you are willing to lend your talents and/or expertise, let Chapter President Paul Loos or any of the Board members know. The Convention committees meet at the Heritage Center, 631 "D" St. on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6pm.

HERZLICHEN GLUCKWUNSCH ZUM GEBURSTAGL *"Happy Birthday"*

July

Virginia Dietrich
Sheryl Heidenreich
Gladys Herstein
Karen Johnson
Jolene McInnis
Mary Ann Shaw
Don Weber

August

Lillian Bauer
Heidi Dinges
Robert Doberstein
Richard Geier
Larry Schenkel
Sandra Schmidt
Robert Settell

FROHLICH JUHRESTAG

"Happy Anniversary"

July

Henry and Sandra Schmidt

August

Dale and Heidi Dinges
Scott and Teri Scott
Bob and Joyce Riddle

(If your name has not been mentioned in the birthday or anniversary acknowledgments, please let us know. We don't want to leave you out.)

Unsere Leute Erinnyng

"Our People in Memory"

Melvin Kroeker

2013 BOARD MEMBER DIRECTORY – LINCOLN CHAPTER – AHSGR

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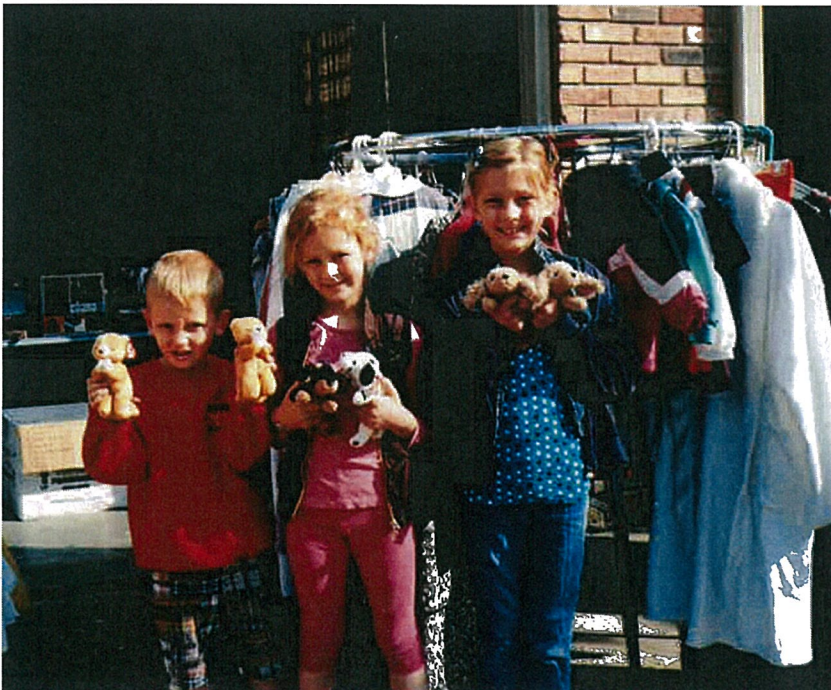
Garage Sale



The garage sale went off without a hitch due to a lot of hard work by the members that are pictured. If you helped but weren't in the picture, let us know so we can correct that (402-438-3814 or lschenkel@neb.rr.com).

The garage sale crew included: Front row, (l to r): Don Weber, Barb Schmidt, Nancy Borrell, Sharon Buckner, Karen Johnson. Second row, (l to r): Ruby Weber, John Weber (aka: Ruby's husband), Judy Runion, Judy Lawson.

These are a great bunch of volunteers and their names are usually found in all of the other activities of the Lincoln Chapter. No report of the garage sale would be complete without our satisfied customers who are pictured below.



Remembering...

by Becky Schenaman

As I write this from my little house in the North Bottoms, it is 85 degrees out and very sunny and humid. Being that I am a frugal little "Rooshin," I have not yet turned on my air conditioner. I just have the back screen door open and my kitchen window up. I usually turn the air conditioner on around 4:30pm when I start getting supper ready. Growing up, we did not have air conditioning.

In my grandparent's home, I honestly do not even remember a fan. The house had a basement kitchen and it had a larger room with a long wooden bench that had arms and it was covered with black leather. I wish I owned it today, it was really pretty and it was cool to lie on and nap.

There also was a toilet in a small wooden enclosure. Then the big coal furnace was also there along with a beet field trunk that Grandpa would turn into a baby chicken raising box in the spring. Hills Hatchery was on 10th Street and in the spring we got chicks for the outside chicken coop. We always had a big garden, a big rose bed, and chickens.

But back to the house and hot weather. Being in the basement kitchen, I always remember the windows were open and it always seemed cool. Every night before bed, we would wash off in the main floor bathroom. The house had two bedrooms on the main floor and a small kitchen. Then the stairs to the attic bedroom which was only used in the winter. It was way too hot to venture up there in the summer.

There was also a very nice living room with a blue satin sofa and chair set, along with a wind-up Victrola. We kids were never allowed to go into the living room. The basement was our domain.

I remember I got very sick when I was about 4 years old and Dr. Finkel came to the house. My Mom put me on that sofa and I was more afraid of lying there than I was of the doctor checking me out. But looking back I do not remember it being overly hot to sleep.

Air conditioning today is a must. But I am still enough of a "Rooshin" to keep my shades pulled and enjoy the in and out of the back door for part of the day.

Do any of you remember those days of going bare-footed and the cool grass on your feet? Along with the fun of getting squirted off with the rubber hose? And enjoying a cold popsicle on a hot sticky day? That was my life in the North Bottoms during the summers of my young life.



If there is one thing G-R's enjoy doing, it's eating. From the May-June newsletter of the Sacramento Valley Chapter I am including the following article:

Favorite Recipes—Cabbage Rolls

by Eleanor Sissell

I have eaten many cabbage rolls prepared in a variety of ways. People who live in different areas and villages have different ways of preparing foods. In the book, "German Food & Folkways" there is a recipe for Cabbages rolls, otherwise known as Pigs in Blankets or Holubtsi.

The basic recipe is with ground meat and rice. Variations include chopped ham or bacon and rice, ground meat and potatoes, ground meat and oatmeal or other cereal grains, buckwheat, potato and pork and a Rhineland variation that includes sauerkraut and raisins.

The basic recipe for the filling is: 2/3 cup cooked or partially cooked rice, 1/2 cup water, 2 lb. pork sausage or 1 lb. each ground pork and beef, 1/2 large onion, minced, 2 tsp. salt, 1 tsp. pepper

Place 12 large cabbage leaves in a bowl half-full of water and covered with plastic wrap. Steam, boil or microwave cabbage leaves until soft, but firm enough to roll the meat in without tearing. After wrapping the filling in the cabbage leaves, prepare a sauce. Most are covered in a tomato sauce. They are cooked or baked for about an hour.

The German Russian sauce has canned tomatoes and 2 tbsp. of lemon juice or vinegar. Sometimes they substitute some of the tomato juice with 1 or more cups of heavy sweet cream.

The Russian sauce version, you roll the cabbage rolls in flour before putting them into a Dutch oven or pan, seam side down. Brown them, carefully turning once, for about 15 minutes before adding the sauce over them: 2 cups heated beef broth, 1/4 cup tomato ketchup or tomato paste, 1 or 2 tsp. brown sugar, salt and pepper.

The Ukrainian Jewish cabbage roll sauce has fresh tomato and sweet and sour sauce. It is the one that sounds best to me since I love sweet and sour sauces.

Recipe:

2 large onions, chopped
3 tbsp. vegetable oil or shortening
Water from the cabbage pot, about 1 cup
Small and/or damaged cabbage leaves for lining the Dutch oven or pan
12 boiled cabbage leaves
Rice and meat filling or variation of your choice, 2 lbs.
Ripe tomatoes, peeled and cut into chunks or 1 each 28oz. can, drained
1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 tsp. salt

Combine onions and oil in a heavy-bottomed frying pan. Pour water over and just cover the onions. Boil and simmer uncovered until water has evaporated and onions are golden, 45-60 minutes. Stir occasionally to keep onions from sticking.

Line the bottom and sides of the Dutch oven or pan with the small and broken cabbage leaves. Place filled cabbage rolls in the pan and cover with the cooked onions.

In a saucepan, heat the tomatoes, lemon juice, brown sugar and salt. Bring to a boil, then pour over the cabbage rolls. Cover and simmer for 1/2 to 2 hours.

Editor's note: We always called them Pigs in a Blanket and, needless to say, they were always better than anyone else's (except Mom's and maybe Grandma's).

Lincoln Chapter AHSGR
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General Membership Meeting

Mark your calendars for the next General Membership meeting and picnic which will be held at the Antelope Park Shelter house at 4pm on September 22nd. It may sound like a long way off but it's never too early to plan an outing.

Congratulations

Once again we would like to congratulate Cara Nickolaus, daughter of Jane and Lowell Nickolaus, for her scholastic achievements. Cara was recently mentioned in the Neighborhood Extra of the Lincoln Journal Star.

Cara graduated summa cum laude from Washington University in St. Louis with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She majored in economics and mathematics. Cara will begin a Ph.D. program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts this fall. She has been awarded a National Science Foundation Fellowship. Cara is a 2009 graduate of Lincoln Northeast High School.

Some of you may remember Cara's mother, Jane, who is a past member of the AHSGR Foundation Board of Directors.

MISSION STATEMENT

The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia is an international organization dedicated to the discovery, collection, preservation, and the dissemination of information related to the history, cultural heritage, and genealogy of Germanic settlers in the Russian Empire and their descendants. The International foundation of American Historical Society of Germans from Russia is responsible for exercising financial stewardship to generate, manage, and allocate resources which advance the mission and assist in securing the future of AHSGR.