

Speaker Biographies

The Black Sea German Research Website



CAROLYN SCHOTT

CAROLYN SCHOTT AND GAYLA ASPENLEITER

Carolyn Schott has researched her German ancestors for 20 years. She's a founder of the Black Sea German Research Community, a former board member of the Germans from Russia Heritage Society, and author of the book, *"Visiting Your Ancestral Town."*

Gayla Aspenleiter is a Webmaster and database administrator for the Black Sea German Research Group. Her research focuses on mainly Lutheran families in the Odessa area of South Russia where her great grandparents settled.

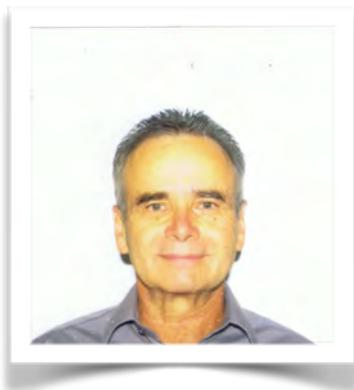


GAYLA ASPENLEITER

The Black Sea German website can be found at: www.blacksea-gr.org

Carolyn's website is: <https://carolynschott.com/published/>

Identifying Volga German First Settlers in Danish and Schleswig Parish Records



WAYNE BONNER

WAYNE H. BONNER

Wayne Bonner has been interested in his ancestry since childhood. He would often ask his mother questions about life in the German South Bottoms of Lincoln where she was born and later raised in Chicago. Wayne could never understand how a German could be born in Russia. As Wayne grew older and got into genealogy, this question continued to intrigue him. Finally, one day through a serendipitous event, his family discovered the AHSGR. At the first meeting, his age old question was finally solved, but it only lead to more questions. Through his quest for more information, Wayne has pushed his research beyond Russia into the German origins of the Volga German settlers which is his primary interest today in addition to assisting fellow Balzer and Moor researchers. Wayne has been a member of the Southern California Chapter of AHSGR since 1983. He has been the village coordinator for Balzer for about 25 years and village coordinator for Moor for over 20 years.

His ancestry is primarily English and Irish, with a little French Canadian and Pennsylvania German. He also has a drop of Native America heritage. In addition to his life membership in AHSGR, Wayne is a member of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants through his father's lineage, and the Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS) of Canada.

Wayne is married to Diane F. Sailer of New York who recently found out that she has an ancestor who went to the German-Russian colony of Riebendorf. He was educated at California State University Long Beach, UCLA, and Reading University in England. Wayne was a professional certified research archaeologist for 40 years. He has been retired for six years.

Germans from Russia Traveled! Finding Germans from Russia in U.S. Passport Records



ALLYN BROSZ

ALLYN BROSZ

Allyn Brosz is a South Dakota native with German-Russian ancestry in Bessarabia and the Glueckstal colonies. He holds bachelors and masters degrees in political science, public administration, and public policy. Early in his career he studied in Germany on a Fulbright grant. Allyn recently retired from a civilian position at the U.S. Department of Defense and has presented at a number of AHSGR and GRHS conventions over the past 25 years. He has served on the AHSGR Board of Directors and has published in the **AHSGR Journal** and **Clues**.

The Road to Warenburg: Interpreting a Village with Maps and Images

RICHARD KISLING IN COLLABORATION WITH RONALD BROTT RONALD BROTT

Ronald Brott was born in Beatrice, Nebraska and lived amongst Black Sea Mennonites and Volga Am Trakt Mennonites on a farm north of Jansen, Nebraska. After leaving the farm, he and his family moved to the west side of Lincoln, Nebraska. Ronald again found himself surrounded by German Russians, this time Volga Germans. Many of his school classmate friends at Lincoln Lutheran Junior High School and later at Lincoln High School were of Volga German descent.

He received his Associate in Applied Science degree in civil engineering from Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. He has worked as a civil engineering technician in the Des Moines, Iowa area for over fifty years. Ronald and his wife April will celebrate their first 50 years of marriage this August.

Ronald joined AHSGR in 1984 where he later served as Treasurer of the International Foundation of AHSGR for a total of four years. Ronald has been a member of the Iowa Wild Rose Chapter since its inception.

RICHARD KISLING

Richard Kisling grew up on a cotton and wheat farm in the southern San Joaquin Valley in Tulare County, California. Both of his parents were from Volga German families in nearby Fresno, so there were regular visits to German-speaking relatives. Richard joined AHSGR in 1982 and subsequently was active in the Golden Gate Chapter.

Richard interviewed his grandfather multiple times over five years in the mid-1980s, and then he was successful in locating two of his grandfather's nephews in Kazakhstan and Tadzhikistan.

Both nephews later migrated to Germany as Spätaussiedler, and Richard visited them there in 2002.

Richard completed bachelor's and master's degrees in Music Education and Piano Performance at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California. After moving to the Bay Area in 1972, he worked as a choral music teacher, sang with the symphony choruses in Oakland and San Francisco, and frequently performed as piano accompanist for recital singers. He also served as a church organist for many years. He completed his career at Chevron headquarters, where he managed office facilities, facilitated meetings, led teams, and worked as an export compliance specialist.

Since retiring seven years ago, he has completed all of the available German classes in Sonoma County where he lives, and he has taken up the piano again to study Bach's "Das wohltemperierte Klavier."



RICHARD KISLING

The Gemütlichkeit of Poetry

SHARON (GRENZ) CHMIELARZ

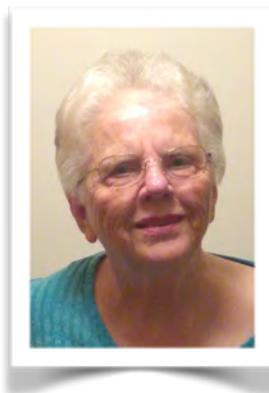
Sharon Chmielarz was born and raised in Mobridge, South Dakota. She graduated with degrees in German, English and Education. Her latest, twelfth, book of poetry is *The J Horoscope*, 2019. A new book, *Speaking in Riddles*, is out spring, 2021. Previous books have been finalists for the Independent Book Publishers Award, Midwest Book Awards, National Poetry Series, and the Next Generation Indie Book Awards. Kirkus Review named her *The Widow's House* and *The J Horoscope* one of the 100 Best Books of 2016 and 2019. She has read at several venues in the Twin Cities, in Duluth and Grand Marais MN, New York City, Toronto, Tucson, the Dakotas, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, California, and North Carolina.

The South Dakota State Poetry Society recognized Sharon (Grenz) Chmielarz with its 2021 Poet of Merit Award. This is a fairly new award, given by the SD Poetry Society in years that fall in between the announcement of a new Poet Laureate.



**SHARON (GRENZ)
CHMIELARZ**

Making Strawberry Verenicks (verenick) from our Central California Chapter cookbook



CONNIE (ENGELMAN) COBERLY

I was born in California to German from Russia parents; Theodor Engelman and Pauline Engelman (who came from Froid in NE Montana). I was raised and went to school in Fresno, CA. I've been married to Larry Coberly for 60 years and have 2 children, Suzanne and Keith. I've been a member of AHSGR-CCC since 2004 and on the board for many of those years.

WITH JIM DEIS, VIDEOGRAPHER

I am a retired educator who was born and raised



JIM DEIS

in the Easton/Fresno area. My daughter, Erin, has inspired me to get into the history of the Germans from Russia, including a trip we took to visit Kukkus and Straub (family villages) three years ago.

Erin also won the story telling award and read her manuscript at the convention in Jackson Hole, WY.

Cultural Differences Among Germans from Russia

Cultural Evolution of a Russian German Family



WILHELM G. DOOS, MD

WILHELM G. DOOS, MD FEATURED SPEAKER ANNUAL MEETING

Bill is a 1.5 generation Russian German immigrant who has been studying the history of Russian Germans for over 30 years.

Mennonites in California: Beyond the Stereotypes

KEVIN ENNS-REMPEL

Kevin Enns-Rempel is the Director of Hiebert Library at Fresno Pacific University. From 1984 until 2015 he was archivist in the Mennonite Library & Archives, also at Fresno Pacific University.



KEVIN ENNS-REMPEL

Go North Young Man: The Remarkable story of Germans from Russia Immigration from the US to the Canadian Prairies 1896 to 1914



WAYNE GARMAN

WAYNE GARMAN

I grew up on a mixed farm southeast of the town of Allan, Saskatchewan, Canada, a predominantly Germans from Russia town near Saskatoon in central Saskatchewan.

Both of my parents were descendants of Germans from Russia. My father's family came from the villages of Elsass and Strassburg of the Black Sea, Kutschurgan region. My mother's family is Mennonite, and came from the Chortitza region, northeast of the Black Sea, from the village of Neu Chortitza.

History has always been an interest of mine. With more time on my hands upon semi-retirement, I was able to complete a Masters of History degree from Texas State University. My desire is that historical research and writing will be my retirement career.

I visited my ancestral villages in the Kutschurgan region of the Ukraine as part of the NDSU 2018 Homeland Tour.

German Origins, Challenges and

Solutions

MAGGIE HEIN

Maggie is one of the AHSGR Village Coordinators for the village of Frank. Her current research project is to identify the German and French origin locations of all of the settlers in Frank and Kolb. When she isn't doing genealogy research, she is a tax accountant and co-owner of a CPA firm in the Chicago suburbs.

Maggie writes a blog provides explanatory material that would be helpful to anyone attending the session.

<https://www.volgagermans.org/blog>



MAGGIE HEIN

"If God Would Have Mercy": Post-WWII German-Russian Refugee Letters

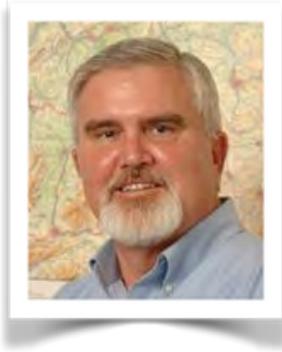
TORIE JONES

Torie is a native of the Fessenden, ND area and began working as an undergraduate intern at the NDSU Libraries' Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC) in July 2015. Torie graduated from NDSU with a triple major in Horticulture, Public History, and History in December 2018 and began pursuing her Masters Degree in Public History in August 2019. She occupied many roles at the GRHC, the most recent being Graduate Assistant. In January 2021, life took her away from Fargo and the GRHC and closer to German-Russian country. While she continues her Masters, she is working at NDSU Extension – LaMoure County. She currently lives on a farm/ranch near Marion, ND with her fiancé.



TORIE JONES

Russian German Dialects in Kansas



WILLIAM KEEL

WILLIAM KEEL

Professor Keel retired after 42 years at the University of Kansas in 2019. He currently teaches courses on German settlements and dialects in Kansas with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and collaborates with KU ScholarWorks on “German Dialect Recordings from Kansas and Missouri.” He edits the Yearbook of German-American Studies and chairs Sister Cities Lawrence.

Researching Your Genealogy in Russian Archives

MILA KORETNIKOV

Dr. Mila Koretnikov, whose mother’s Volga German family was deported to Siberia from the colony of N. Dobrinka in 1941, is a lecturer in cross-cultural communication at the Cooperative University of Baden-Württemberg in Karlsruhe, Germany, and a teacher of Business English at Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft in Karlsruhe, Germany. She has also spoken world-wide on the subject of Volga German culture and history, and serves on behalf of the AHSGR, GRHS, and Volga German Institute at UNF as a lead researcher and translator for interactions with Russian archives. Since 2015 Dr. Koretnikov has been leading tours to ancestral villages in the Volga area. She grew up in Russia and holds degrees from Saratov State University. She did post-doc study at the University of Wyoming.



MILA KORETNIKOV

You are welcome to email her at koretmila@gmail.com.

Germans from Russia and the Railroads: A Continued Investigation

BOB LETTENBERGER, EDUCATION DIRECTOR – NATIONAL RAILROAD MUSEUM

Bob Lettenberger currently serves as director of education for the National Railroad Museum. Lettenberger has been part of the Museum staff since 1999, when he began as operations manager and communications director. In his capacity as Educator, the Museum’s programming has grown to serve over 11,000 patrons annually. Currently the education department offers a range of programs from children’s storytime to continuing education courses for adults. Lettenberger has a passion for railroads and their history, which has led him to represent the Museum in such national settings as History Channel’s Modern Marvels, Travel Channel’s Mysteries of the Museum and C-Span’s American History TV. In his time with the Museum, he has also served as a consultant to other historical organizations on railroad-related topics and reviewed numerous children’s books dealing with trains. Lettenberger completed his undergraduate studies in journalism and broadcasting at UW-Oshkosh.

Cousins (DNA + Genealogy)

LEE MACKLIN, MBA, MIS

Mr. Macklin has given many Genealogy and DNA-based presentations and published articles in journals, newsletters, and websites. He has extensively researched genetic genealogy and worked with many people analyzing their Ancestry.com and 23andMe DNA test results. He spent many years in private industry as a software engineer and technical project manager. He also held several technology management positions at the State of California. He has an MBA and Master's Degree in Information Technology. He is a military veteran, U.S. Navy, Vietnam era.



LEE MACKLIN, MBA,
MIS

Odessa! Notes on a Roots Journey to the Black Sea

DEBRA MARQUART

Debra Marquart is a Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State University and Iowa's Poet Laureate. She is the Senior Editor of *Flyway: Journal of Writing & Environment*. A memoirist, poet, and performing musician, Marquart is the author of seven books including an environmental memoir of place, *The Horizontal World: Growing Up Wild in the Middle of Nowhere* and a collection of poems, *Small Buried Things: Poems*. Marquart teaches in ISU's interdisciplinary MFA Program in Creative Writing and Environment and in the Stonecoast Low-Residency MFA Program at the University of Southern Maine. Her next two books, *Gratitude with Dogs Under Stars: New & Collected Poems* and *The Night We Landed on the Moon: Essays of Exile & Belonging*, are forthcoming in 2021.



DEBRA MARQUART

A memoirist, poet, and performing musician, Marquart is the author of seven books including an environmental memoir of place, *The Horizontal World: Growing Up Wild in the Middle of Nowhere* and a collection of poems, *Small Buried Things: Poems*. Marquart's most recent book, *The Night We Landed on the Moon: Essays Between Exile & Belonging*, was published in 2021. Marquart's short story collection, *The Hunger Bone: Rock & Roll Stories* drew on her experiences as a former road musician. A singer/songwriter, she continues to perform solo and with her jazz-poetry performance project, *The Bone People*, with whom she has recorded two CDs. Her poetry collection, "Gratitude with Dogs Under Stars: New & Collected Poems" is forthcoming from New Rivers Press.

For More Information: debramarquart.com

The Russian German Community in World War I: A prelude to life in the Soviet Union.

ULRICH MERTEN

The author was born in Berlin, Germany and came to the United States as a small child before the Second World War. Mr. Merten grew up in New York City and after the war, returned to Europe, studying at the University of Zürich, Switzerland and the University of Zaragoza in Spain. He subsequently earned his BA degree at Columbia College, Columbia University and M.A. at the Graduate Faculties, Columbia University.



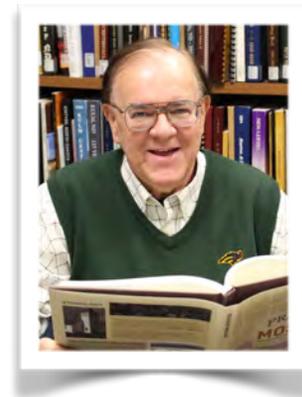
ULRICH MERTEN

In his professional life he was an international banker, a senior executive of the Bank of America, working almost exclusively in Latin America and the Caribbean, over a period of 38 years. His book, *“Forgotten Voices; The Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe after World War II”* was published in 2012 by Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey. In (2015) a companion history was published by the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Lincoln, Nebraska, entitled *“Voices from the Gulag: The Oppression of the German minority in the Soviet Union”*. Mr. Merten’s most recent book, *“The Gulag in East Germany: Soviet Special Camps, 1945-1950”* was published in 2018, by Teneo Press, Amherst, New York. The author lives in Miami, Florida.

A Volga German Foodways Documentary –

MICHAEL MILLER & DODIE ROTHERHAM.

Michael M. Miller is Director & Bibliographer at the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo. He has been at NDSU since 1967. Miller compiled the book, *Researching the Germans from Russia: Annotated Bibliography of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection* (1987). He is co-author of *The Peter Miller (Mueller) Genealogy* (2008) and *The Welk Homestead: A Source Book* (2015). He was instrumental to securing the Lawrence Welk Collection at the NDSU Archives. Michael is executive producer of ten documentaries in the award-winning Prairie Public Germans from Russia Documentary Series. In 1996, Michael began leading the Journey to the Homeland Tours to Germany and Ukraine continues to co-lead them today, he has led 23 tours to date. Miller is a native of Strasburg, ND, where he grew up speaking English and German. His Baumgartner family emigrated in 1889 from Strassburg, Kutschurgan District, South Russia, to Strasburg, ND. His Miller (Mueller) family emigrated in 1894 from Krasna, Bessarabia, to Krasna, ND. His higher education degrees are: Bachelor of Science, Valley City State University; Master of Science and Master of Education, University of North Dakota.



MICHAEL MILLER

Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu

Donita “Dodie” Reich Rotherham grew up in the North Bottoms in Lincoln, Nebraska. Both her maternal and paternal families were Volga Germans. Her grandparents immigrated to the USA in 1910 and 1912 and lived their entire lives in the North Bottoms in Lincoln.

She has been interested in her family history since childhood. Her maternal grandparents lived next door and paternal grandparents 1 ½ blocks away. She grew up hearing stories and kept notes of life on the Volga, the ships on the Volga, the marriage maker visits, arranged marriages and the terrible winter storms endured by the villagers.

For the past 40 years she has actively researched her family and has connected to relatives in Siberia and Germany, connecting with her grand uncles family this past year and her French connection in 2019.

Dodie has been a member of AHSGR since the 1970's and an active board member since 2007. She is currently involved with raising funds to purchase records from Russia and for the documentary of Volga German Foodways. She also continues to work with the Ancestral/Genalogy committee's small publishing group, translating and editing vital records. The past year she has chaired the 'Passports to Freedom' Committee and co-chaired the 'Letters from Hell' project.

Dodie served as AHSGR president 2017 - 2020

Germans in the Towns of Tsarist Russia and the early Soviet State



REINHOLD NACHTIGAL

REINHARD NACHTIGAL

Reinhard Nachtigal studied European History, English and Slavic philology at the universities of Münster (Westphalia), Edinburgh (Scotland), and eventually took his doctoral exams at Freiburg University with a thesis on Central Powers' prisoners of war in WWI Russia. Since then he has published on late Tsarist Russia, on humanitarian initiatives during WWI and WW II, on Germans in Russia, on the organisation of public health in Tsarist Russia and the early Soviet Union, and on the history of transport in Russia (Murmansk Railway, Communications in the Caucasus). He was involved in editorial work for publications on Russian history and literature, in translation and in consulting for historical documentary. From 2012 until 2016 he was a fellow of the Collaborative Research Center at Freiburg University on "Heroization, Heroes and Heroisms". He studied German, British and Austrian archival sources for a hitherto neglected aspect of WWI naval war, the role of hospital ships during War.

He is the author of five monographs, two of which had been published in Russian language. His book on the construction of the Murmansk Railway in 1915-1918 has seen a second German edition

and is designed for an English translation.

What's new in Family Tree Maker

MARK OLSEN

Mark Olsen is the Family Tree Maker Ambassador to historical and genealogical societies around the world working to support their members as they use Family Tree Maker. Mark is a graduate of Brigham Young University and holds a bachelor's degree in Family History with a Spanish records emphasis. He has been working in the genealogy industry since 2007.

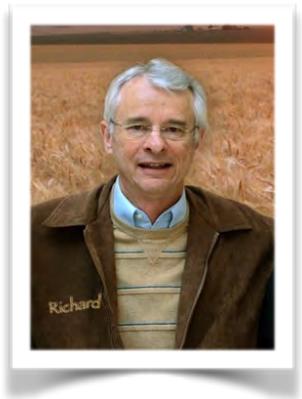


MARK OLSEN

Hardship to Homeland: Folktales of Pacific Northwest Germans from Russia

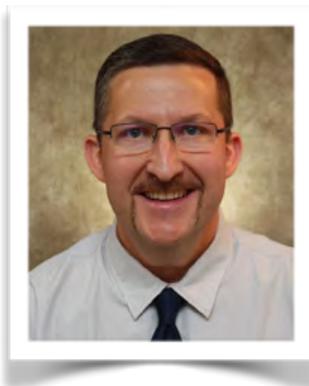
RICHARD SCHEUERMAN
OPENING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Richard Scheuerman is professor emeritus of education and history at Seattle Pacific University and the author of several books on Northwest regional themes including *Hardship to Homeland: Pacific Northwest Volga Germans*. He has traveled to Russia a dozen times to facilitate student exchanges and retrieve documents on Russian-German history from state archives. Scheuerman is also cofounder of Palouse Colony Farm near his hometown of Endicott, Washington, where the family raises heritage grains and operates an artisan flour milling operation.



RICHARD SCHEUERMAN

The Intersecting Lives and Fates of Bishop Anton Zerr of the Tiraspol Diocese and the Schmalz Family of Kandel in South Russia



DR. ERIC J. SCHMALTZ

DR. ERIC J. SCHMALTZ

Eric J. Schmalz earned a Ph.D. in History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Since 2005, he has taught Modern European, American, and World History at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva and in 2019 began serving as Departmental Chair of Social Sciences. In 2014, he received the John Barton Distinguished Teaching and Service Award at his university and has been nominated for it on three other occasions. His research concentrates on Modern Germany and Modern Russia with an emphasis on ethnic and nationality issues, as well as German migration topics. Over the past three decades, he has contributed a variety of articles and translations to AHSGR, GRHS, and the North Dakota State University Libraries in Fargo and has given frequent public talks both here and abroad. His other articles and reviews have appeared in local newspapers, interdisciplinary journals, and major international anthologies.

Is My Name Schreiber or Becker? - How One Volga German Solved a Mystery and Found Their Ancestral Home in Germany

STEVE SCHREIBER

Steve Schreiber is a native of Oregon and graduated from Oregon State University. He served as the Director of Portland International Airport which has been recognized as one of the best airports in North America. After retirement from the Port of Portland, Steve continued his professional career as an airport consultant.

Steve is a descendant of Volga Germans through both his maternal and paternal families. Dedicated to AHSGR, Steve is a Life Member and served as President of the Oregon Chapter. Over the years,



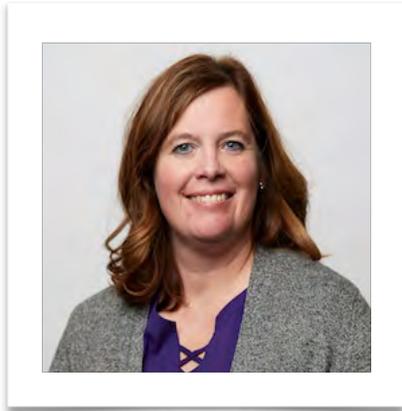
STEVE SCHREIBER

Steve has had the opportunity to visit his ancestral villages in Germany and Russia.

Steve is passionate about documenting his family history and enjoys sharing what he has learned with others. He is the webmaster for the Norka, Russia and Volga Germans in Portland websites. He also assists with The Volga Germans website.

Importance of Family History in Genealogy Work: Oral history: A crucial piece in family history

RACHEL J TROTTER, EVALOGUE COMPANY



RACHEL J TROTTER

Rachel has been telling stories since she could walk and talk. As a little girl, she would draw for hours and make up stories to go along with her artwork. Before coming to EvalogueLife, she worked as a newspaper reporter for 17 years at Ogden's local newspaper, The Standard-Examiner. She reported on heavy topics ranging from heated city elections to local school issues. But her love for writing about people's life stories and their triumphs over tragedy captured her heart.

She loves family storytelling. A graduate of Weber State University, she has had articles featured on LDSLiving.com, Id-s.org, FamilySearch.org and Meridian Magazine. She has been a speaker at RootsTech, Weber State University Family History Conference, Conference on Family History at BYU and the Southern California Genealogy Jamboree. She helps people tell and write their life stories and has written six life stories with several more in production. She has also helped

several others write their own stories. She and her husband Mat have six children and she recently became a grandma! She and her family live on the East Bench in Ogden, Utah.

Growing Up German-Russian without Realizing it !

MERVIN WEISS



MERVIN WEISS

Merv Weiss grew up on a farm in southwestern Saskatchewan. All four of his grandparents were Germans born in the former Russian Empire, and who immigrated as married couples with children to Canada in 1913 and 1925. My paternal grandparents came to Saskatchewan from Odessa district in 1913. My mother came to Saskatchewan with her family from Crimea in 1925. The vast majority of the early pioneer homesteaders in the nearby communities were Germans who had emigrated from the Black Sea region of old South Russia (today Ukraine).

Merv has been actively researching his German-Russian background since the year 2000. Successful genealogical research requires an understanding of the relevant history and geography. I am a former teacher and business owner, and now retired. I am particularly fascinated by the history of the Germans who lived in Crimea, and have spent a good part of the last 20 years trying to learn more.

To this end, he has made several trips to Ukraine and to Germany. Locating and meeting de-

scendants of his Grandfather's siblings has been the most rewarding aspect of his family research.

I am a founding member of the Black Sea German Research group (www.blackseagr.org). I am also a member of GRHS and AHSGR.

Letters, genealogy, and emails: How the Volga Germans kept and re-established communication between cousins in the Americas, Germany, and Russia



FABIAN ZUBIA SCHULTHEIS

FABIAN ZUBIA SCHULTHEIS

Prof. Fabian Zubia Schultheis

He is Professor in History and works at the College of Librarians in Buenos Aires City teaching History of Cultural Processes and History of Books and Libraries. He also works at the National Library of Argentina as cataloger of Special Materials (old maps and ephemeral material). He is co-coordinator of Dönhof and Neu Dönhof at the AHSGR since 2017.

Carrying on the Needlework Traditions of the Volga German Women

DEBBIE HEARNE, NARRATOR
SHARI MEHLING STONE, QUILT TURNER
ANNETTE ADAMS, QUILT TURNER
DEE HERT, CONSULTANT
DAVE HERT, VIDEOGRAPHER

Passports to Freedom - The Immigration of the Germans from Russia to America

DODIE ROTHERHAM, AHSGR BOD, PAST PRESIDENT
NATHAN HARRIS, AHSGR RESEARCH LIBRARIAN
JONATHAN ROWE, AHSGR PUBLICATIONS COORDINATOR
SARA ROBERTS, CONSULTANT
MILA KORETNIKOV, CONSULTANT
CHERYL GLANZ, AHSGR BOD, SECRETARY
KEVIN RUPP, AHSGR BOD
SUE NAKAJI, AHSGR BOD, VICE PRESIDENT