



## AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

Honoring our Past • Embracing the Future

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### **52<sup>nd</sup> Annual AHSGR Convention Arrives in Lincoln July 27-30**

**Lincoln, Nebraska, May 9, 2022** – Descendants of Germans from Russia will gather for the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR) Convention in Lincoln this summer, the first in person convention in over two years.

The convention's theme, "Honoring the Past · Embracing the Future," will feature over thirty speakers from the United States, Germany, and Canada. The event celebrates the attendees' German from Russia ancestors, the brave souls who answered the call of Catherine the Great and her grandson Alexander II to relocate to Russia during the late 1700s to early 1800s, and their descendants around the world.

AHSGR President Karen Soeken is pleased the organization will bring people together again. "The in-person convention provides the extra benefit of renewing relationships and forming new ones. There are always stories and memories to share to realize that we have a common history and culture and, in the process, discover new connections with those attending. It might be the connection of a shared story or memory, but it might also be a new family connection. The other advantage is to realize just how much AHSGR does in carrying out our mission and how valuable the work is that we all contribute to, whether it's through time or resources. The enthusiasm is contagious!"

Convention Committee Chairperson Susan Nakaji said the convention, held at Embassy Suites located at 1040 P Street, is one you don't want to miss. "We have an exciting line-up of speakers, many who have never spoken at our conventions before. Speakers from many areas of the Germans from Russia diaspora: we have speakers covering Catholics in Siberia to Mennonites in Canada. We will explore our connection to the current conflict in Ukraine and the Black Sea German Colonies. We will learn about some personal histories of escape from Russia and the history of specific German Colonies."

In addition, Soeken said, "There is always more to learn about our history from the presentations at the convention. Sometimes the presentation is a refresher for me, but other times the topic is entirely new or something I had not thought about. Even when it's a refresher, I pick up on something I had not heard or realized before."

Nakaji emphasized that the convention is the perfect venue to explore the German Russian Culture and Folklore with Food Demonstrations, local tours, and presentations on Textiles, Quilts and Dialects.

"The pre-convention tours are ideal to understand the German Russian culture in Lincoln: touring the North and South bottom of Lincoln, the International Quilt Museum or the day trip to the National Homestead Monument, I want to attend all of the tours! The Textile Treasures from the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University and then the Quilt presentation from the International Quilt museum are two of cultural presentations I am looking forward to."

It's also the place to jump start your genealogical family tracking as part of the AHSGR research library will be moved to the hotel where many village coordinators, fellow researchers, volunteers, and the AHSGR librarian will be on hand to assist with questions. There will also be an on-site bookstore where you can browse the latest publications and pick up your next great read. AHSGR hosts a quarterly book club meeting which features books available from the store.

Nakaji believes that the speakers, tours, and research library are only the beginning of the benefits to attend the convention. She said, "The best advantage to attending the in-person convention is the fellowship of the people. I have made many friends and met numerous new cousins at the conventions, it is the connections you make with people."

"Have you ever walked into a room and felt instantly at home? I was visiting with a group of people after the end of one of the sessions, and the humor, the give and take of the conversations was like being in a room full of my fathers. It was eye-opening for me, these are my people, this is where my family gets its sense of humor and wit; that other people do not seem to grasp," said Nakaji. "I remember I went to my first village gathering for Frank, Russia; I was asked, to whom are you related? I answered: 'I am not related to anyone,' but by the end of that Convention, I found out that if you are from the village of Frank, I am related to you. My family may not have had many sons, but we had plenty of daughters, and those daughters became the wives of many branches of the families in Frank."

On Friday night, the River Boys will provide Dutch Hop and polka music and festivities for convention attendees. The dance will be open for the public to attend for \$10 per person at the door. Support for the Dutch Hop dance was provided by Nebraska Folklife. Cash bar will be available.

To conclude, Nakaji explained "I am most looking forward to heading to the research room as I have a new clue about my fifth great grandfather for which I want to follow up. And the presentations "Coming Full Circle: To Poland, the Black Sea, and Back," will peak my interest about my Black Sea roots. The Other Germans- The History of Germans from Russia in the Texas Panhandle and Northwest Oklahoma, will be an opportunity for me to learn about settlement in this part of the country, I have a few cousins that ended up in Oklahoma."

While the convention is primarily in-person presentations, it is a hybrid event which offers Zoom accessible sessions for virtual participation for some presentations. For registration details, visit <https://ahsgr.org/event/2022-convention/>. For hotel reservations, visit <https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation>.

Join AHSGR as a member and enjoy savings on registration, bookstore purchases plus access to exclusive members only benefits such as research discounts and free access to the library, museum and the quarterly Journal and Newsletter. Check out all the details at <https://ahsgr.org/membership/>.

AHSGR is a non-profit educational organization engaged in researching the history of German who settled in the Russian Empire during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This includes areas of present-day Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan. The AHSGR headquarters are located at 631 D Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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