



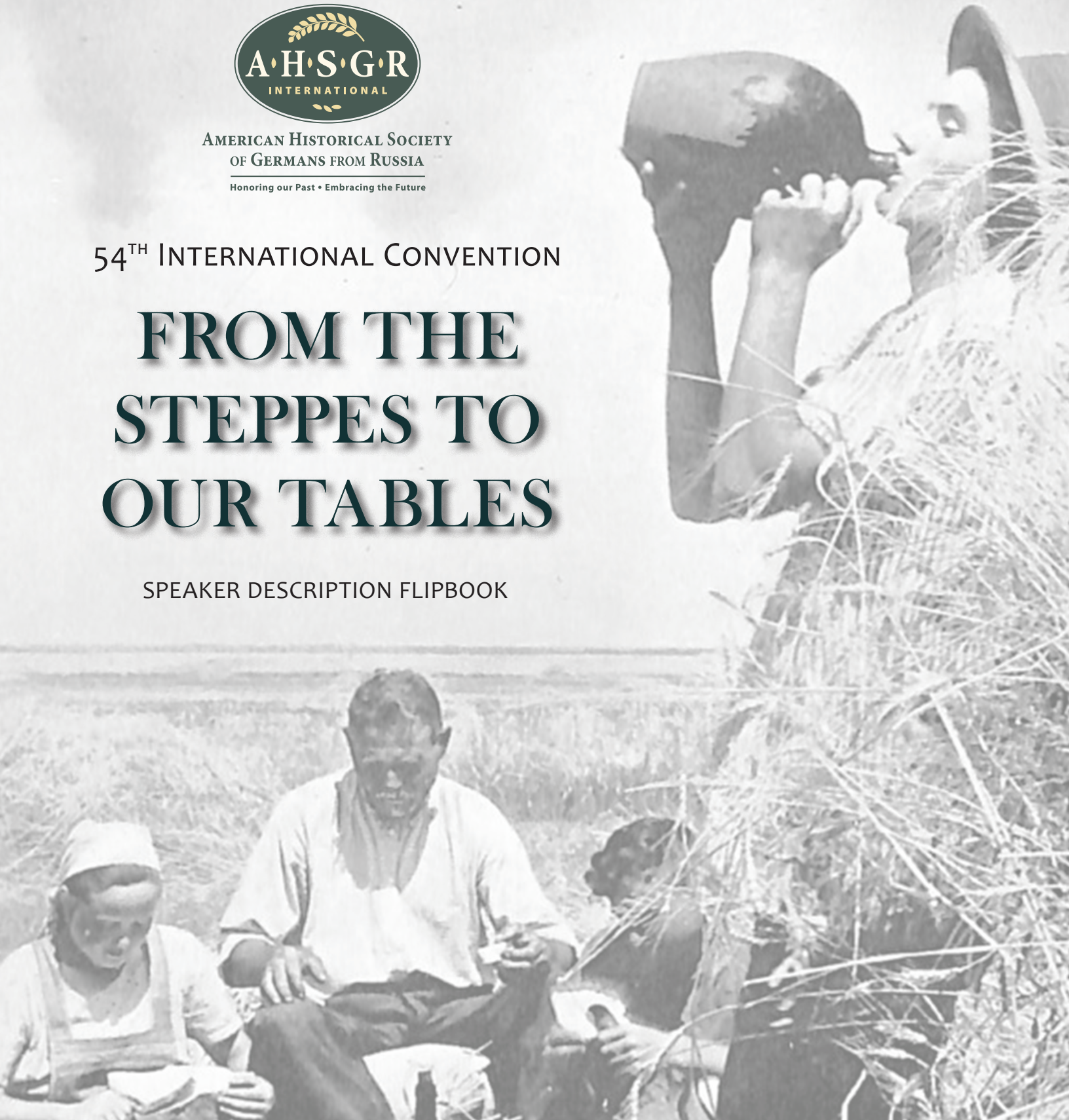
AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

Honoring our Past • Embracing the Future

54TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

FROM THE STEPPE TO OUR TABLES

SPEAKER DESCRIPTION FLIPBOOK



August 7-9, 2024

Sheraton Downtown Hotel
1 North Broadway Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK

WEDNESDAY SPEAKERS

William Ridinger

9-10 am

Across the Iron Curtain - One Family's Odyssey

When the Red Army flooded across the Bug River in March of 1944, the villages of the Beresan region were in danger of being overrun. With only hours to spare, they loaded up their wagons and carts and set off on an odyssey that for many would last years, and would scatter them over three continents. Despite the distances and hardships throughout the Cold War years, families stayed in touch and would eventually become reunited.

Peggy Goertzen

9-10 am

Overcoming "Brick Walls" through German Newspaper Research

Presentation will present possible strategies for uncovering missing information in your family history through German newspaper research, including details of birth, place of origin, parentage, baptism, education, marriage, kinship, medical history, death, and burial.

Carolyn Zeisset

9-10 am

Caught in the Middle: A WWI Home-Front Story

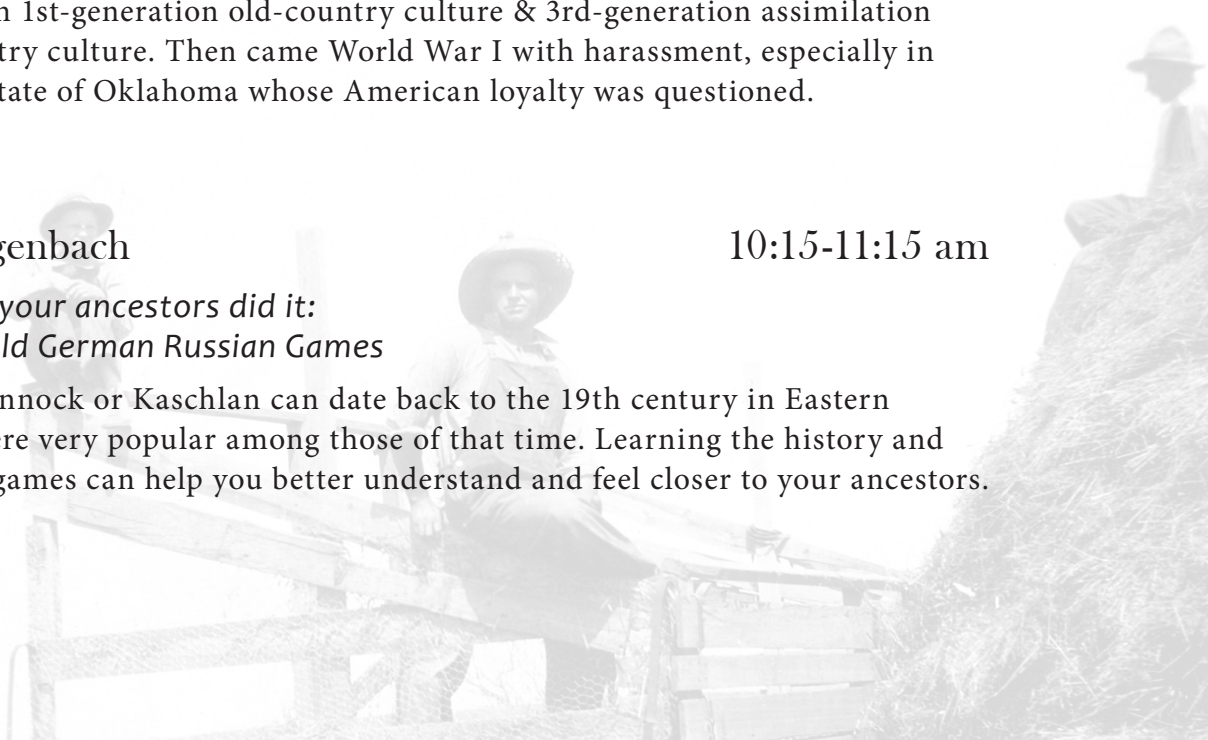
After promises made a century earlier to German-speaking people in Russia were revoked and they immigrated to America in the 1800s, the next generation felt caught between 1st-generation old-country culture & 3rd-generation assimilation into new-country culture. Then came World War I with harassment, especially in the fledgling state of Oklahoma whose American loyalty was questioned.

Emily Gengenbach

10:15-11:15 am

*Just like how your ancestors did it:
How to play old German Russian Games*

Games like Bunnock or Kaschlan can date back to the 19th century in Eastern Europe and were very popular among those of that time. Learning the history and rules of these games can help you better understand and feel closer to your ancestors.



WEDNESDAY SPEAKERS CONT.

Amber Mikkelsen

10:15-11:15 am

Research Room Orientation

The Research Room Orientation will introduce members to the convention research room and discuss materials that will be available to aid in their genealogical research.

Wyatt Atchley

10:15-11:15 am

Prairie Preservation: Cultural Architecture of Black Sea Germans in North Dakota

“Prairie Preservation” explores the architectural legacy of Black Sea Germans from Russia in North Dakota, focusing on their unique home construction. The presentation also confronts the challenge of abandoned homes on the prairies, posing the key question: “How do homesteads contribute to the broader context of historic preservation?”

Karen Keehr

11:30 am-12:30 pm

Innovation and Digitization at AHSGR

AHSGR Archives is entering an exciting new era of digitization. Find out how we scan the photographs and documents in the AHSGR Archives, what our priorities are, and what the future holds. Learn how to access the new digitized images through our new PastPerfect Online portal. Karen will also offer a few tips and tricks on how best to digitize your own family treasures.

Michael Brown

11:30 am-12:30 pm

German Russian Artists of the Gulag

Most Gulag camps had “art houses” where artists were officially tasked with creating works of propaganda, and they provided art and portraits for administrators, guards, and inmates. This presentation examines the way art was produced in the Gulag and identifies several significant German Russian artists who spent time in the Gulag system.

WEDNESDAY SPEAKERS CONT.

Tina Siemens

11:30 am-12:30 pm

Immigration story, my family going from Canada to Mexico in the 1920's, From Mexico to Seminole Texas in 1977.

The patterns of history repeat itself. Immigration stories from the 1500s to the present day, the Mennonite culture has a repetitive history of migration. Through it all it amazes me to see how many of the traditions have survived throughout the generations and countries. Tina opened The West Texas Living Heritage Museum in 2023. Mennonite and Texas History.

Wilhelm G. Doos

1:30-2:30 pm

Germans to Russia and Beyond

This will be an overview of the German Agrarian movements to Russia, when and where they settled, where they came from, and their subsequent movements in Russia and the Soviet Union. This will also outline what happened to them during WWI and WWII and after the 1950s and 1990s. Comments will be made about the various Imperial Decrees limiting and abrogating their original settlers' rights. A description of the exodus out of Russia and the Soviet Union and where they went to. A brief comment will be made about the assimilation process during the 1800s, early 1900s, and after the dissolution of the USSR.

Steve Fast

1:30-2:30 pm

Unblocking Anna Block: Combining Russian and West Prussian Records to Break a Brick Wall

A case study to present strategies for combining Russian census and immigration records with West Prussian land and church records to find the ancestors of a Mennonite girl who immigrated to Russia in 1819.

Cary Bright

1:30-2:30 pm

Drilling Down on your DNA Matches

Learn how to drill down on your DNA matches to isolate a group by matches, using the tools provided by the three DNA Co, FTDNA, Ancestry, or MyHeritage. Then learn ways to capture these groups of matches for further analysis on your home computer.

THURSDAY SPEAKERS

Michael Brown

8-9:30 am

Keynote Speaker: The Beet Master: A history of mechanized sugar beet harvesting

When I was young, I found a tool in my grandfather's barn that was the size of a scoop shovel, but rather than a spade, it had four large tines like a giant fork. When I asked him what it was for, he said "That's how we harvested beets." On that day in the field, he was using a machine that cut the green tops off the beets, plowed them out of the ground, lifted them in a bin above the plow, and used a conveyer belt to load them on a truck driving alongside. When I asked him about the machine, he said, "I built that machine."

My grandfather was part of the history of innovations in the mechanization of beet harvesting. Many agricultural innovations came from those farmers working in the fields and looking for ways to improve their efficiency and productivity, and my grandfather was among them. This presentation examines the history of mechanized sugar beet production as various machines were developed and perfected to harvest beets. It also points to the problematic relationship between individual farmers and the large agricultural businesses who might benefit from these innovations.

Erika Weidemann Bravo

10-11 am

Mennonites on the Move: German Russians in World War II

This presentation follows Soviet-German Mennonites during World War II from Nazi resettlement to Poland in 1943 through their flight ahead of the advancing Soviet Army in 1945. For those who survived the war and escaped repatriation to the USSR, post-war immigration provided an opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Philip C. Bryan, M.D.

10-11 am

The Indian Removal Act of 1830, The Trail of Tears and the Settlement of Oklahoma by our Germans from Russia Ancestors

The Indian Removal Act of 1830: its impact on the native Americans of the Southeast United States and their removal to Indian Territory. The "Dawes Act" and the "civilizing" of the Indians and its eventual opening of Indian Territory to our Germans from Russia ancestors. Numerous G-R family stories are cited.

THURSDAY SPEAKERS CONT.

Maggie Hein

10-11 am

*“German (and French and Danish) Church Records Online
Documenting your ancestors before they immigrated Russia”*

You probably know where your ancestors settled in Russia and when they arrived there. What about where they lived before they moved to Russia? Have you wondered how to access records in Europe to research your ancestors? Church parish records are the main source of documentation of births, marriages, and deaths of our ancestors. Many European archives have digitized their collections and made the images available online. Some of these websites are even free to use.

This presentation will cover European websites including Matricula Online, Archion, Rigsarkivet, and French Departmental Archives, and the American websites FamilySearch and Ancestry. Topics covered will include how to access and navigate each website and what records you can expect to find.

Carolyn Zeisset

1:15-2:15 pm

Keeping Your Heritage Story Alive

Grandparents and older relatives are often keepers of family heritage. Storytelling can keep it alive for younger generations. This program is not about memoirs, histories, or novels. It will share story examples to stimulate thinking, with pauses to make notes or tell others story snippets you would like younger generations to know about your heritage.

Edward J. Swierczewski Jr., MA

10-11 am

Using Artificial Intelligence for Common Genealogical Tasks

The newest tool is AI, and we need to understand its benefits and limitations. Use cases will demonstrate some of the abilities of AI for common genealogical tasks like Summarization, Extraction, and Translation. A handout will be distributed with prompts so that these skills can be put to immediate use.

Mervin Weiss

10-11 am

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05

The disasters of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 awakened the Russian peasants and factory workers to the injustices and weaknesses of the Tsarist regime. The open and broadly based opposition following the war would lead directly to the Russian Revolutions of 1917.

THURSDAY SPEAKERS CONT.

Robert Russell

2:30-3:30 pm

Variations on a Theme: Exploring German from Russia Cookbooks

This session will focus on similarities and differences in recipes from locations that are predominantly German from Russia. The aim is to provide a look at variations present in traditional foods, along with a look at unique recipes. Research presented will include surveys of cookbooks and social media.

Peggy Goertzen

2:30-3:30 pm

Building Community in Russian-German Settlements through German Newspapers

German newspapers facilitated connections, community and mutual aid in Russian-German settlements in the US, Canada, Russia and Poland through the publishing of correspondence, reports, and advertisements.

Carolyn Schott

2:30-3:30 pm

ABC ... 123 ... EWZ! Diving into Using EWZ Records for Your Research

This presentation will discuss the history of EWZ (Einwanderungszentralstelle) records, the different types of records, and how to access them for your research on German families repatriating from Eastern Europe during WWII.

Panel

4:15-5:45 pm

Germans from the Russian Empire - Our Shared Heritage

Immerse yourself in a captivating exploration led by panelists Carolyn Schott, Merv Weiss, David Jahn, Anna Dalhaimer Bartkowski, and the skilled facilitator Mike Meisinger. Together, they delve into the rich tapestry of settlements, cherished traditions, vibrant culture, and intertwined heritage of the Bessarabia, Black Sea, Mennonite, and Volga colonists within the vast expanse of the Russian Empire.

FRIDAY SPEAKERS

Dr. Eric J. Schmaltz

8:30-9:30 am

People on the Way: German from Russia Settlements in Oklahoma and Texas (1880s-1920s)

This presentation outlines the push-pull factors encouraging German from Russia migrations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to Oklahoma and Texas. After considering the group's resilience and adaptation in their new prairie homelands, the discussion also reflects on the German Russians' broader impact and legacy in the region.

Cary Bright

8:30-9:30 am

Drilling Down on your DNA Matches

Learn how to drill down on your DNA matches to isolate a group by matches, using the tools provided by the three DNA Co, FTDNA, Ancestry, or MyHeritage. Then learn ways to capture these groups of matches for further analysis on your home computer.

Kay Fritzler Pimple

8:30-9:30 am

Make a German (Froebel) Star

A German (Froebel) Star: Are you familiar with the tradition of folding these colorful stars, dipping them in wax, and adorning the Christmas tree? You will make and take your own star! Please join me in this walk back in history, and bring a friend or cousin you just met!

Carolyn Zeisset

9:45-10:45 am

Keeping Your Heritage Story Alive

Grandparents and older relatives are often keepers of family heritage. Storytelling can keep it alive for younger generations. This program is not about memoirs, histories, or novels. It will share story examples to stimulate thinking, with pauses to make notes or tell others story snippets you would like younger generations to know about your heritage.

Ulrich Merten

9:45-10:45 am

The Baltic Germans - A History: 1200-1939

Over the centuries, the German role in the Baltics was a bittersweet mixture of domination combined with the introduction and cultivation of western-style civilization. The Baltic Germans created, in large part, the Latvian and Estonian nations we know today. Learn more about this fascinating history.

FRIDAY SPEAKERS CONT.

Doug Schoenhals

9:45-10:45 am

Shattuck Windmill Museum

History of the Shattuck Windmill Museum, the origin of the Museum and its founder, History of the settlement of the Shattuck Area, and explanation of the Museum displays.

Wayne Garman

11 am-12 pm

War and German Immigration to Russia – 1760 to 1820

Wars had a major influence on our ancestors' decision to immigrate from Germany to Russia. My presentation will describe these conflicts as well as their impact on the German farming population, including our ancestors. I will also explain how without war, our history and lives would have been far different.

Phil Goldfarb

11 am-12 pm

Traveling to America in Steerage and Whether to Admit or Deport our Ancestors.

This presentation discusses the history of ship travel to the United States from the 1830s to the 1920s. What it was like for our ancestors to travel on these ships, especially in steerage, what they did, how they felt, and how they prepared to enter the US. We will also discuss in detail the processing of immigrants into the United States with an emphasis on Ellis Island.

Russ Gunther

11 am-12 pm

Scout Explorer Voyages to America

In 1874 two groups of scouts were elected from German villages in Russia to explore prospects for emigration to the Americas. (Did you know they weren't originally planning to see the United States?!) Hear about their voyages, their invitation from a king, the routes, where they ended up, and what they brought back!

FRIDAY SPEAKERS CONT.

Carolyn Schott

1:15-2:15 pm

Walking in the Footsteps of Your Ancestors

Visiting places where your ancestors lived can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience that opens the door to better understanding your ancestors' lives. Learn strategies for getting the most out of a visit to an ancestral town and making local contacts. We'll also talk about genealogy research tips for identifying the place of origin of your ancestors.

Wyatt Atchley

1:15-2:15 pm

Prairie Preservation: Cultural Architecture of Black Sea Germans in North Dakota

"Prairie Preservation" explores the architectural legacy of Black Sea Germans from Russia in North Dakota, focusing on their unique home construction. The presentation also confronts the challenge of abandoned homes on the prairies, posing the key question: "How do homesteads contribute to the broader context of historic preservation?"

Phil Goldfarb

1:15-2:15 pm

The History of U.S. Passports, U.S. Passport Applications, Russian/Lithuania/Latvia Internal Passports and Nansen Passports For Refugees

This session discusses the history of passports which began in 450 BCE and continues with a discussion of U.S Passports, Passport Applications, and information that can be found, including examples of Passport Applications. We will then focus on Russian, Lithuania, and Latvian Internal Passports with examples. Finally, the Nansen Passports for refugees will be discussed.

Brent Mai

2:30-3:30 pm

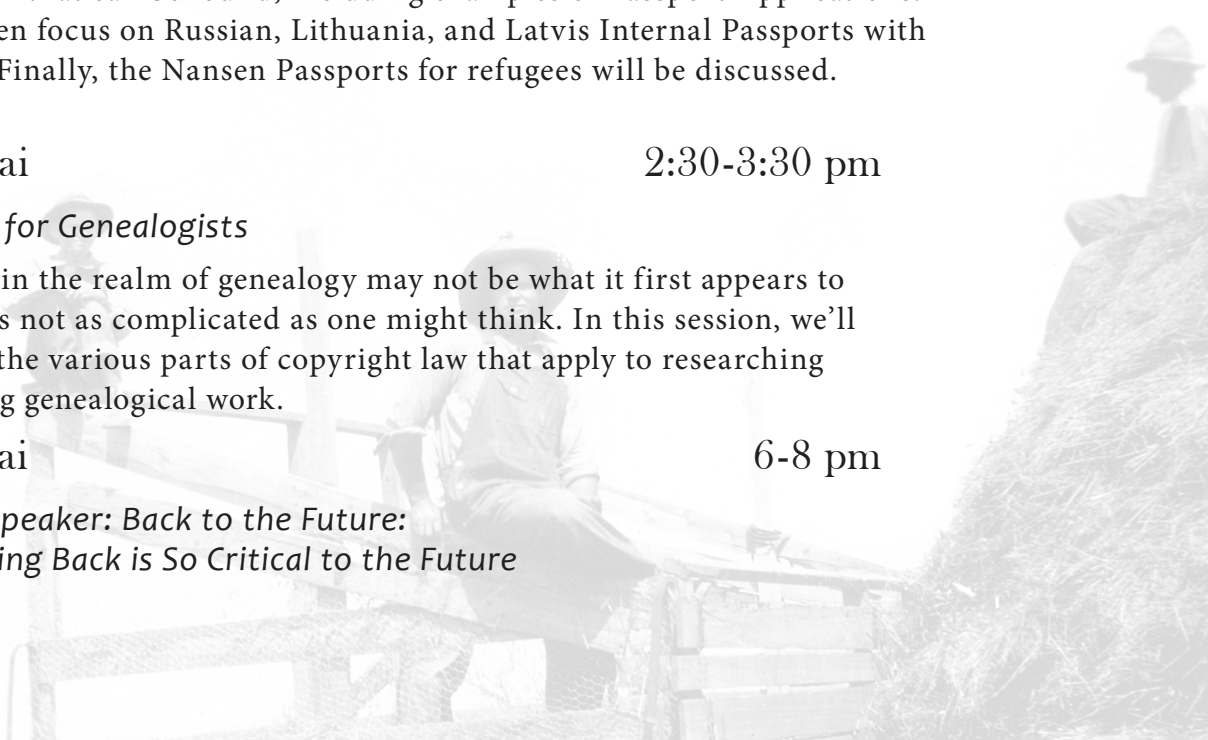
Copyright for Genealogists

Copyright in the realm of genealogy may not be what it first appears to be – but it's not as complicated as one might think. In this session, we'll delve into the various parts of copyright law that apply to researching and sharing genealogical work.

Brent Mai

6-8 pm

Banquet Speaker: Back to the Future: Why Looking Back is So Critical to the Future



MEET THE SPEAKERS



Wyatt Atchley

Wyatt Atchley, MA in History from NDSU, serves as the Special Collections Archivist at the Libraries Department. He dedicates himself to preserving and sharing local history through his work at the University Archives and the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at NDSU.



Anna Dalhaimer Bartkowski

Anna Dalhaimer Bartkowski traces her paternal line to the Russian villages of Mariental and Louis and her maternal line to Reinwald, Rosenfeld am Nachoi, and Balzer. With the support of many AHSGR mentors and friends, she has traced most lines back to their Germanic origins as early as 1699. She is an enthusiastic family historian and grebel lover. She is the author of *Dead Reckoning, A Rosalind Schmidt Genealogical Mystery*, *Maggie Visits Grandpa*, *Maggie Visits Argentina*, *Value Meals on the Volga*, *Grebel and Gemütlichkeit*, and *Journeys to Authorship: How Wannabe Writers Can Realize Their Publishing Dreams*. For more information, and to receive storytelling tips, please visit annabartkowski.com.



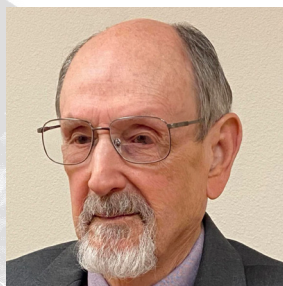
Cary Bright

Cary Bright is co-founder of Seattle Genealogical Society DNA SIG. She loves helping learners have Aha moments. She wishes there was just more time to organize those matches, from the 9 Kits she manages. Cary's a graduate of SLIG Virtual All-DNA, Advanced Evidence Analysis Practicum and speaks on DNA topics.



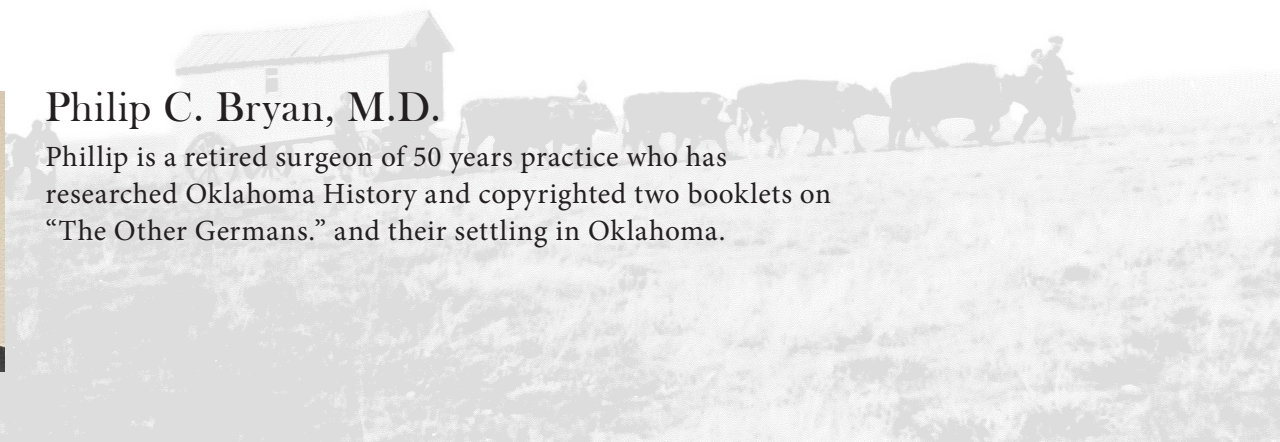
Michael Brown

Michael Brown is Professor Emeritus at the University of Wyoming. He is second generation German Russian; his grandfather immigrated from the Volga region in 1912. He has spent time in Kazakhstan examining the lives of German Russians in the Kazakh gulag system. He spent four years as editor of the *Journal of AHSGR*.



Philip C. Bryan, M.D.

Phillip is a retired surgeon of 50 years practice who has researched Oklahoma History and copyrighted two booklets on "The Other Germans." and their settling in Oklahoma.



MEET THE SPEAKERS



Wilhelm G. Doos

Dr. Doos has been researching his family genealogy and history for more than 40 years. He was born in the USSR and immigrated to the USA in 1951. He has subsequently visited Russia, Siberia, North Caucasus, Ukraine, Poland, and Germany to visit ancestral village sites and meet close and distant relatives to acquire a detailed history of his extensive Doos family. His family tree includes over 1,000 individuals. Through research associates in Russia, Ukraine, and Germany, he has obtained extensive archival material relative to his ancestral villages and their inhabitants. He has published several articles and books on the subject through AHSGR but also in several Russian history journals. He is extremely interested in the cultural assimilation of the German-speaking diaspora in Russia and other countries they eventually moved to.



Steve Fast

Steve Fast is a financial consultant in the oil and gas industry. He has researched his Mennonite ancestors since his 8th grade English teacher introduced him to genealogy. He has taught himself to read German script and is fluent in Russian.



Kay Fritzler Pimple

Kay Fritzler Pimple is Volga Deutsch. Her father's family came from Grimm, to Russell, Kansas and eventually to Sterling, Colorado. She and her husband, Tom, are members of the, North Texas Chapter of Germans From Russia. She is excited for the opportunity to have a hands on demonstration, and to teach you!



Wayne Garman

Wayne Garman is a descendant of Germans from Russia on both sides of his family, including the Kutschurgan villages of Elsass & Strassburg and the Mennonite villages of Chortitza. Wayne grew up on a farm near the town of Allan, Saskatchewan, Canada, a predominantly GR community. Upon semi-retirement, Wayne completed a Masters of History degree from Texas State University. Historical research and writing now make up his retirement career.



Emily Gengenbach

Emily Gengenbach grew up in a small town in the middle of Nebraska and went to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to receive a degree in history and a minor in English. She is working towards her master's degree in Library Science and with an archives certification. Emily is the Museum Services and Volunteer Coordinator at the AHSGR.

MEET THE SPEAKERS



Peggy Goertzen

Peggy Goertzen is a historian, author, and speaker dedicated to Mennonite and German-Russian research. She is a native of Bakersfield, California, graduate of Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas. She is an archivist and Director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Tabor College. She is passionate about researching and writing church histories, family histories, local histories, and newspaper extracts.



Phil Goldfarb

Phil Goldfarb is a pharmacist by profession. His great grandfather was a pharmacist in Mogilev, Belarus and in Ekaterinoslav, Ukraine. Researching genealogy for 35+ years, Phil is the founding and current President of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Tulsa which he started in 2005. He has lectured extensively on various topics in genealogy, published articles in numerous periodicals, and authors a monthly column in the Tulsa Jewish Review as well as a weekly Genealogy Newsletter that goes to 170,000 Jewish genealogists around the world. He has written two books titled A Page of History: Passport Applications 1851-1914 and 1915-1925. In July 2020 he won an Emmy Award as a Co-Producer for the Tulsa Historical Society's documentary titled: L'dor V'dor Generation to Generation: A History of Tulsa's Jewish Community.



Russ Gunther

Russ is a Brand Ambassador volunteer and Volga German sub-project coordinator of WikiTree's growing Germans from Russia project covering all Germans from Russia populations and colony villages. Russ studied Business and minored in German at Iowa State University, including a study abroad summer in Bregenz, Austria. Join Russ to explore one of the most exciting free resources for family connections and research that he used to root his family tree back to the 1600s in Germany. Russ is also the 3rd great-grandson of the 1874 scout explorer Anton Wasinger of Schönchen and a grand-nephew of scout explorer Peter Leiker of Obermonjou.



Maggie Hein

Maggie Hein is one of the AHSGR Village Coordinators for the village of Frank. Her ongoing research project is to identify the German and French origin locations of settlers in Frank and Kolb, and to publish the origin locations of settlers in other Volga German colonies whenever she happens to find them. 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 about Volga German genealogy, which you can find at <https://www.volgagermans.org/blog>



Dr. David Jahn

Dr. David Jahn is a research meteorologist at the University of Oklahoma. He is a descendent of a group of Swiss Mennonites, who emigrated from Volhynia (Northwest Ukraine) to Kansas in 1874. David is active in his local church and has participated in numerous mission outreaches overseas. He has traveled extensively in Europe and Asia and speaks several languages including German.

MEET THE SPEAKERS



Karen Keehr

Karen Keehr is the AHSGR Archivist and has worked in the Archives field for over 22 years, with specialized training in digital imaging and photograph preservation. She loves what she does and is always happy to answer questions. Originally from Minnesota, Karen developed a taste for green chili while doing her graduate work at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. When not at work, she enjoys spending time with her husband and stepson.



Brent Mai

Dr. Brent Mai currently serves as Dean of Libraries at Wichita State University in Kansas. He has over 30 years of experience leading libraries including those at Wichita State, the University of North Florida, Fairfield University, Concordia University in Portland, Vanderbilt University, and Purdue University. Since 2016, he has served as the director of the Volga German Institute through which he shares his research on the socio-economic movement patterns of the Volga Germans. Dr. Mai has published several books and articles on the history and culture of the Volga Germans, many of which were published by AHSGR.



Mike Meisinger

Mike Meisinger grew up on a dairy farm in northeastern Colorado. He has been researching his father's German Russian ancestors ever since he wrote a college term paper about the Germans from Russia in 1973. He is a past Vice President of the AHSGR Board of Directors and is the Village Coordinator for Messer and Neu Messer. Three of his mother's ancestors were Revolutionary War Soldiers, and through that heritage, he is a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. His articles "Finding Uncle Reavis" and "Proving Pembroke" have been published in the Missouri State Genealogical Association Journal.



Ulrich Merten

Ulrich was born in Berlin, Germany and came to the United States as a child before the Second World War. He 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. 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. In 2015, a companion history was published by the AHSGR entitled *Voices from the Gulag: The Oppression of the German minority in the Soviet Union*. His most recent book, *The Gulag in East Germany: Soviet Special Camps, 1945-1950* was published in 2018.



Amber Mikkelsen

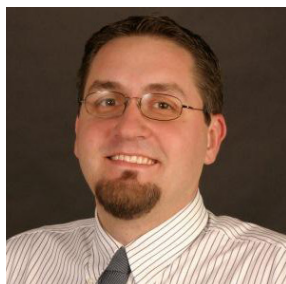
Amber Mikkelsen is the Archival Research Coordinator with the AHSGR. She has been with the organization since April 2023. Before joining the AHSGR, she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree with highest distinction in Linguistics and a minor in Psychology from the University of Kansas. During her studies, she completed a thesis that earned her an Undergraduate Research Award. Concurrently, she worked in archival manuscript processing for the Kenneth Spencer Research Library. From this, she gained professional archival skills. Additionally, Amber has a background in library work and has volunteered at museums, further enriching her professional expertise.

MEET THE SPEAKERS



William Ridinger

Bill was born in Germany to a Bavarian mother and a Black Sea German father, who immigrated to America when he was six. After earning a degree in Civil Engineering, he spent much of his career overseas, including assignments in Russia and Kazakhstan, where he began to explore his German Russian roots. His book “Orchards on the Steppes” (available in the AHSGR bookstore) is based on his family history. Bill is also the Village Coordinator for Rohrbach.



Robert Russell

Robert Russell is the director of the South Dakota Germans from Russia Cultural Center in Aberdeen, SD. The campus is home to permanent exhibits and a research collection, and hosts events focused on the German from Russia experience. Mr. Russell has been at Northern State University for twenty years and also serves as the Library Director.



Dr. Eric J. Schmaltz

Dr. Eric J. Schmaltz is Professor of History, Departmental Chair of Social Sciences, and Co-Executive Director of the Endowed Institute for Citizenship Studies at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva. His research concentrates on Modern Germany and Russia with an emphasis on ethnic and nationality issues, including German migration topics.



Doug Schoenhals

Doug is a lifelong resident of the Shattuck OK, Higgins, TX area and descendent of German Russian parents. Doug is married and has one son, he worked as a Diesel fuel Injection Specialist for forty-four years in his shop “Schoenhals Diesel Service” before retiring in 2018 and became a full-time volunteer at the Shattuck Windmill Museum.



Carolyn Schott

Carolyn Schott has researched her German ancestors in Eastern Europe for 20+ years. She’s one of the founders 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.”

MEET THE SPEAKERS



Tina Siemens

Tina Rempel Siemens immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico in 1977, becoming a U.S. citizen in 1986. She married her best friend, John Siemens, on April 17, 1988. She is the proud mother of two sons, both married, and Oma to four precious grandchildren. Tina has served on various boards and Seminole, including the Chamber and the Hospital Board. In November 2015, Tina had the great honor of being named citizen of the year of Seminole, Texas. In 2024, Tina was named best author in Seminole, Texas. Hardly a day goes by that she doesn't tell someone how proud she is to be an American! She is an author of two books, third one coming spring of 2024.



Edward J. Swierczewski Jr., MA

Edward has been a professional educator for over 30 years, and a genealogist for almost 30 years. His education includes multiple GRIP, SLIG, and AI courses, and a ProGen alum. He's the founder of Integrative Genealogy, an award-winning writer and scholarship winner, and presented genealogy webinars locally and nationally, and possesses a deep passion for sharing knowledge.



Erika Weidemann Bravo

Erika (Weidemann) Bravo holds her MA and PhD in History from Texas A&M University where she studied the movement of Germans from Russia in the twentieth century. She currently serves as the editor of the AHSGR Journal and teaches undergraduate courses on immigration and the Second World War.



Mervin Weiss

Mervin Weiss has always been interested in the historical background of the Germans who lived in the Russian Empire. All four of his grandparents were born in what is today Ukraine. He has traveled six times to Ukraine to visit his ancestral villages. Merv lives in Saskatoon, Canada.



Carolyn Zeisset

Carolyn Zeisset is author of the historical fiction novel *Then the Rules Changed* (2022). Currently her writing interest is in World War I experiences of people with German-speaking heritage. She has been an educator at preschool, elementary, middle school, and adult levels in public school, religious education, and business settings.

