

MEET THE SPEAKERS



Wyatt Atchley

Wyatt Atchley is the Special Collections Archivist for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University. He earned his Master of Arts in History from NDSU in 2023 and was a Graduate Assistant for the GRHC for two years. Last year at the 2024 AHSGR convention, Wyatt presented on German Russian architecture in North Dakota.



Michael Brown

Michael Brown is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Wyoming. He grew up in Buffalo, WY, and is connected to his Volga German heritage through his grandfather (Brug) who was from the village of Bauer (Karamyshevka) in the Volga region. He received his doctorate from the University of Utah in 1994 and served as a Professor at the University of Wyoming from 1994 to 2017. He has been a member of the AHSGR Board of Directors since 2017 and served four years as the AHSGR Journal editor. Since 2012 he has traveled to Kazakhstan several times as a visiting professor at the Kazakh National University and used these opportunities to learn about German Russians there.



Bridgette Crosby

Bridgette Crosby is a remarkable individual whose diverse talents and passions have earned her recognition on multiple fronts. As a National Award Winning Poet, she has captivated audiences with her profound and evocative works. Born to Volga German and Irish parents, Bridgette embraces her rich heritage with pride. She channels this pride into her role as a community activist and volunteer, having been recognized as Woman of the Year in Queen Creek for her tireless efforts to improve her community.



Sawyer Flynn

Sawyer Flynn is a current Master of Arts student in History at North Dakota State University. Sawyer has numerous years of service to the National Park Service, including as a U.S. Park Police Officer and a “living historian” at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site.



Wayne Garman

Wayne Garman grew up on a farm near Allan, Saskatchewan, Canada, a Germans from Russia community near Saskatoon in the central part of the province. His paternal ancestors came from the Kutschurgan colonies of Elsass and Strassburg. His maternal ancestors came from the Mennonite colony of Chortitza in the village of Neu Chortitza. Upon semi-retirement, Wayne completed a Master of History degree from Texas State University. He splits his time between Glendale, AZ, and Saskatoon, SK.



Emily Gengenbach

Emily Gengenbach was originally from a small town in Nebraska but came to Lincoln to pursue a history degree. She recently graduated with her master's in library and information science. Before Emily worked at AHSGR, she had worked in public and academic libraries since 2015. Now she works at AHSGR as the Librarian & Program Coordinator.



Lisamarie Griebel Small

Lisamarie Griebel Small is a PhD student in Russian History at the University of Houston. She holds a B.A. in History and Russian from Bryn Mawr College and an M.A. in Russian History from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her dissertation research examines the lives of ethnic Germans in Kazakhstan and the emergence of a new Soviet-German identity following the deportations of 1941. During her previous studies on foreign famine relief to the Volga in 1921, she studied with Professor Arkady German at Saratov State University and worked in the Volga German archives. Her grandmother was born in the Volga village of Reinwald.



André Hammann

André Hammann is from Tres de Maio, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. He is an engineer and has been researching the migration history of his 85 German-speaking ancestors in the South American country since 2000. Hammann is an active supporter of the DAGV member GenealogiaRS a board member of the International German Genealogy Partnership (IGGP), a participant and speaker at IGGC conferences, and the author of a book about German-speaking families in Brazil.



Libby Horken

Libby Horken is the Publications, Marketing, and Exhibits Coordinator at AHSGR. She graduated from the University of Nebraska Lincoln with a BFA in Graphic Design and specializes in print and publishing design. In addition to chairing the Editorial and Publications Committee, she now coordinates the exhibits at the Heritage Center.



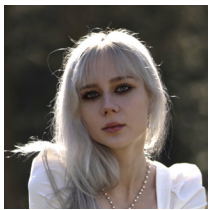
Karen Keehr

Karen Keehr is the Archivist at AHSGR. Karen joined the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia in June 2022 with over 25 years of experience in the Archives and Museum fields. She has specialized training in digital imaging and photograph preservation. One of her goals at AHSGR is to increase access to our unique German Russian collections through digital access and improved archival processing.



Olga Litzenberger

Prof. Dr. Olga Litzenberger was born in Saratov (Russia) into a family of Volga Germans. She worked as a professor and vice-rector of Saratov University. She defended two dissertations on the history of the Lutheran and Catholic Church in Russia. Since 2019 she has been working as a researcher at the Bavarian Cultural Center for Germans from Russia (Nuremberg, Germany). Olga Litzenberger is the author of about 300 scientific publications on the history and culture of Russian Germans published in Russia, Germany, the United States, Italy, Finland, and other countries.



Elisabeth Litzenberger

Elisabeth Litzenberger was born in Russia in 2005 and has been living in Germany since 2017. Since childhood, she has participated in ethnographic expeditions to the Volga German colonies, and has repeatedly participated in foreign seminars and conferences on the history and culture of Russian Germans and international exchange programs.



Mark Loudon

Mark Loudon is the Alfred L. Shoemaker and J. William Frey, and Don Yoder Professor of Germanic Linguistics and Director of the Max Kade Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A fluent speaker of Pennsylvania Dutch, most of his research and public outreach center on the language, faith, and culture of its main speakers, Amish and traditional Mennonites.



Allyson Maughan

Allyson is a genealogy speaker, writer, and consultant. She finished her AG in the Southwest Region in 2024. She completed Gen Proof in 2023, and ProGen 53 in 2022. She graduated from Idaho State University in 2001. She volunteers with UGA as a board member. She enjoys pictures and writing. She shares tips on rememberingrelatives.weebly.com. She lives in SLC with her husband and three girls.



Reinhard Nachtigal

Reinhard Nachtigal earned his PhD in Modern and East European History in 2000 from the University of Freiburg in Germany. He is currently affiliated with the Historisches Seminar at the University of Freiburg where he researches, edits, and translates Eastern European historical work. His research includes examinations of Germans in Russia and the history of the great powers on WWI's Eastern front. Public health, transport history in Russia, and issues of International Humanitarian Law during military conflicts are also objects of his research/concern.



Jason Phillips

Jason Phillips is currently an Associate Professor of History at Peru State College. He received his PhD from the University of Arkansas in 2019. His research focuses on the history of the Northern Great Plains, particularly Kansas and Nebraska politics.



Kim Phillips

Kim is a writer and history buff who loves to share her enthusiasm for stories from the past. She grew up in western Kansas hearing about her Volga German family members and the challenges they endured. She is a military veteran with a degree in journalism which led to a career in public relations in Arizona. Later, she dropped out of the corporate world to run a country bed and breakfast along the Katy Trail in Missouri. Now retired, she lives in the Kansas City area where she is working on a historical fiction based on memoirs and audio recordings of her ancestors.



Bill Pickelhaupt

Bill Pickelhaupt is a 75-year-old descendant of a Volga German father. He went to a church founded by Volga Germans in Port Huron, Michigan, and this heavily influenced him. He is the author of *The Right Place at the Right Time* (2009) and *Kind Colony on the Volga: Coming Together, Their Lives and Diaspora* (2024).



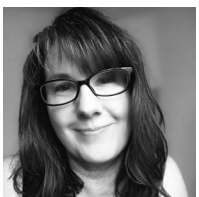
William Ridinger

Born to a Bavarian mother and a Black Sea German father, Bill's family immigrated to the United States when he was six years old. After growing up in northeastern Colorado in a sea of Germans from Russia, he went on to earn a Master's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Colorado. Much of his career was spent overseas, including multiple assignments in Russia and Kazakhstan, where he began to explore his German Russian roots. He is the author of *Orchards on the Steppes*, a historical fiction account of the lives of his ancestors in Rohrbach.



Tanja Schell

Dr. Tatjana "Tanja" Schell was born and raised in Russia. Her family originally comes from the Volga German village of Seewald where they lived until September 1941, when the entire village population was deported eastward to the region of Omsk in Siberia. In the late 1990s, her family left Russia for Germany. She has been involved with the AHSGR for twenty years and has presented to many AHSGR chapters across the country. In 2024, she helped her 97-year-old grandfather Adam Schell to present one of the AHSGR's online sessions of "Treffen Tuesday". Her ancestral villages in Russia are Seewald (family names: Schell, Arzer, Mari) and Rothammel (family name: Lechmann). Tanja holds a PhD in English from North Dakota State University and now lives in Germany with her partner and two children.



Sandy Schilling Payne

Sandy Schilling Payne is a descendant of Black Sea Germans on both sides of her family, Lutherans from the Glückstal colonies and Catholics from the Kutschurgan colonies. Her interest in genealogy began in 1994, and she has since researched her German origins in the modern-day countries of Germany, France, Switzerland, Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Canada, and the United States. She is a part of the Black Sea German Research group, the webmaster for the Glückstal Colonies Research Association, and the author of the *Germans from Russia Settlement Locations* project.



Eric 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. He earned a Ph.D. in History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His research concentrates on Modern Germany and Modern Russia with an emphasis on ethnic and nationality issues, as well as German migration topics.



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*.



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 three books.



Lena Wolf

Lena Wolf was born in Latvia to ethnic German parents but grew up in Aktobe, Kazakhstan. This city became her family's home after their deportation from Ukraine in 1941. Originally, her family had settled in various regions, including Ukraine, the Planer colonies by Mariupol, and southern Russia. In 1989, Lena's family moved to Offenbach am Main, Germany. Lena's thirst for adventure led her to New Zealand, where she learned English. She pursued higher education at Goethe University in Frankfurt and Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, earning both her BA and Master's degrees. Currently, Lena calls London home. Her journey spanning Latvia, Kazakhstan, Germany, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom has given her a profound perspective on the concept of belonging, which is reflected in the title of her graphic novel, *May the Universe be Your Home!*



Carolyn Zeisset

Carolyn Zeisset's GR heritage is from Molotschna and a daughter colony. She is a life-long educator and author of the historical fiction novel *Then the Rules Changed* (2022) about immigration from South Russia to America. The forthcoming novel *Caught in the Middle* is about the home-front experiences of people with German-speaking heritage in World War I.