



2024-2025 Annual Committee Reports

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Ancestral Records Committee

Committee Member: Michael Brown, Olga Litzenberger, Dodie Rotherham (Co-Chair), Kevin Rupp (Co-Chair)

In the past year the Ancestral Records Committee/Small Publishing Committee completed publication of the following records. These are all available for sale through the AHSGR Store.

Letters from Hell 1934
Kukkus Kanton Marriage Records 1925
Kukkus Deportation List 1942
Messer Birth Records 1821-1835
Messer Death Records 1805-1892
Neu Messer Settlers 1862-1863
Norka Birth Records 1894-1902

The following records are in the process of being translated and prepared for publication. Note that records from after 1865 are generally in Russian.

Balzer Communion Register Records 1834-1845
Balzer Marriage Records 1900-1905
Dietel Family List 1897
Dreisnitz Death Records 1919-1922
Dreisnitz Marriage Records 1919-1922
Eckheim Birth Records 1897-1907
Eckheim Birth Records 1908-1921
Eckheim Death Records 1870-1914
Enders Family List 1874 Revised 1896, Updated through 1909
Grimm Death Records 1923
Grimm Marriage Records 1922-1923 & 1925
Jost Death Records 1924-1925
Katharinenstadt Death Records 1801-1816
Katharinenstadt Family List 1882-1900
Krasnojarsk (Krasnoyarsk) Death Records 1899-1908, 1912
Kukkus Kanton Divorce Records 1922-1924
Merkel Death Records 1923
Norka Birth Records 1858-1872
Norka Birth Records 1873-1883
Norka Birth Records 1903-1910
Norka Church Register Records 1876-1890 Vol 1 & 2
Norka Communion Records 1897-1912 Vol 1 & 2
Norka Marriage Records 1922-1923 & 1925

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Volunteer translators or donations are needed to accelerate the translation of records held by AHSGR!

AHSGR has purchased a number of deportation lists from the Black Sea area and will post them on the AHSGR website for members to view. These list cover numerous villages and are some of the first to be translated into English from Russian/Ukrainian. The records will be posted for viewing as they become available to AHSGR.

Last year, two excerpts from the Aussiedler Collection were completed. These excerpts contain a translated voice over recording, making these priceless recordings available to the English-speaking audience. Our goal is to complete this process for the entire 60 hours of recordings in the Aussiedler Collection. Volunteer help is needed. Individuals interested in assisting with translation of tapes or doing voice recordings may contact this committee. Knowledge of the German language is required to assist with translations.

Treffen Tuesday continues to be a successful program for members as well as non-members. Attendance is generally between 100 – 200 attendees. This program is held the last Tuesday of each month, except for the convention month, November and December. All 2025 presentations are scheduled and 2026 speakers are currently being scheduled. Individuals interested in presenting a program for Treffen Tuesday are encouraged to contact Dodie Rotherham through AHSGR.



Convention Committee

Committee Members: Michael Brown, Ray Karlin, Dodie Rotherham, Jack Unger (Chair)

The 54th Annual AHSGR International Convention was held August 7-9, 2024 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and had 218 attendees. The Central Oklahoma and North Texas Chapters joined forces to co-host the convention and provided a large team of enthusiastic volunteers. The convention program covered topics representing our diverse settlement areas in Russia as well as the unique experience of the Germans from Russia in Oklahoma and Texas. From the keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Brown, to the banquet speaker, Dr. Brent Mai, the presentations and speakers were consistently of high quality, contained new information and were well attended.

The 55th Annual AHSGR International Convention will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska at the Embassy Suites Hotel on July 30 through August 1, 2025.

- Expanded program covering three full days
- Program is structured to focus on our Germans from Russia history, heritage and experience in Germany, Russia and the Americas.
- Single track program so that attendees can attend all sessions.
- Speakers have been selected from across the globe to provide new information that has not been shared at past conventions.
- AHSGR Heritage Center will be open throughout the convention so that attendees can visit our museum and research library.

Future Conventions

The 56th Annual AHSGR International Convention will be held in Hays, Kansas on August 5-7, 2026. The convention is being held in conjunction with the 150th Anniversary of the first Volga German settlers arriving in Ellis County, Kansas.

The 57th Annual AHSGR International Convention will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska on July 28-30, 2027.



Culture and Folklore Committee

Committee Members: Sheri Ertl (Chair), Cheryl Glanz, Kristine Jones, Ray Karlin, Larry Kimble, Sue Nakaji, Harold Penner, Rosalind Rockweit

The Folklore Committee continues to focus on three activities: the AHSGR Storytelling Contest, AHSGR Book Club, and recipes.

Storytelling Contest

Storytelling is an important oral and written tradition that ensures that the Germans from Russia history and heritage is captured and passed on to future generations.

The 2024 Storytelling Contest winners were announced in a virtual Zoom session on October 10, 2024. This was a change from past years where the Storytelling Contest winners were announced at the annual convention. This change was made to encourage story submissions and reach a larger audience.

The 2025 Storytelling Contest Zoom event will be November 25, 2025 as part of the Treffen Tuesday presentation series.

- Submissions can be fiction or non-fiction stories as well as poetry.
- Submission deadline is September 12.
- The Storytelling Contest is open to AHSGR members and non-members. Youth (under age 15) are also encouraged to participate.
- Prizes will be:
Short Story Category: \$250 first place, \$150, second place, \$100, third place.
Poetry Category: \$250 first place, \$150, second place, \$100, third place.

The AHSGR Writer's Group is available for anyone wanting to connect with other writers, explore writing ideas, and ask questions about writing stories, poems, and articles about their families. The Writer's Group is held virtually via Zoom.

Book Club

The quarterly AHSGR Book Club focuses on the stories and history in books about the German from Russia experience. The Book Club is open to members and non-members and is held virtually via Zoom. In the past-year the following books were explored:

- *Surviving Siberia* by Floyd Seher
- *Songs of the She Bear* by Frank Edward Leddusire
- *Alla Lizzie* by Helen Eichstaedt
- *A Social Study of the Russian German* by Hattie Plum Williams (planned on September 8, 2025)

All books are available from the AHSGR Store.



Recipes

Monthly recipes continue to focus on the foods cooked and eaten by our families both in the Russian Empire and the areas they settled after leaving. These recipes are very popular on AHSGR's social media accounts.



Editorial and Publications Committee

Committee Members: Michael Brown, Libby Horken (Chair), Elizabeth Koch, Olga Litzenberger, Kevin Rupp, Sandra Wagner, Alan Wambold, Erika Weidemann Bravo (Journal Editor)

Completed Projects

- Quarterly AHSGR Journal and Newsletter
- Published *The Adventures of Konrad the Kamel* by Anna Dalhaimer Bartkowski and illustrated by Elizabeth Koch.
- Reprinted *Einwanderung in Das Wolgagebeit 1764-1767* Bands 3 and 4. Available in the AHSGR Store, along with Bands 1 and 2.
- *Resumo Histórico e Genealogia dos Alemães do Volga (Historical Summary and Genealogy of the Volga Germans) 1877-1997* by Carlos Alberto Schwab with introduction translation by Kristine Jones. Available digitally for members on the AHSGR website (under Research section).
- *May the Universe be Your Home* by Lena Wolf now available in the AHSGR Store. AHSGR is the first North American seller of the book.
- Bill Pickelhaupt's *Kind Colony on the Volga* is now available in the AHSGR Store.
- *1934 Letters from Hell*, the latest in a monograph series is now available in the AHSGR Store.
- Seven new monographs of village census and church records were published (see [Ancestral Records Committee](#) summary for details). These are now available in the AHSGR Store.

Future Project

- *The Czar's Germans* by Hattie Plum Williams will be reprinted and debut in October 2025.
- *Images of America* book on the North and South Bottoms of Lincoln, NE. This photo book would be through Arcadia Press and likely released during the 2027 convention in Lincoln, NE.



Finance and Investment Committee

Committee Members: Gary Fuchs (Chair), Wayne Garman, Dodie Rotherham, John Spady, Jeff Stoll

During this year, the Finance Committee reviewed 2024 actual budget performance against the approved 2024 budget plan and established a 2025 operating budget. The committee, with the designated members of the Investment Committee, reviewed the investment plan and began the active management of the Society investments under advice of Charles Schwab Corporation (Schwab).

With the passing of Jerry Siebert, it became necessary to engage professional investment management capabilities. The committee met (October 1, 2024) with Schwab financial advisors to review the current investment strategy and decided to continue to maintain the funds in Schwab and rely on their investment advice. On October 13, 2024, the Investment Committee met with our Schwab advisors and provided an overview of the portfolio and purpose of the respective accounts. Subsequently, the Investment Committee reviewed Schwab's proposed investment strategy and approved the new plan to diversify the industry segmentation and to remain neutral between growth and stable assets. These changes were approved and implemented on December 5, 2024.

The Investment Committee met on January 22, 2025 and reviewed the initial performance and made minor adjustments based on Schwab recommendations. The Investment Committee met on April 2, 2025, and reviewed Q1 performance and approved further diversification and rebalancing of asset categories. The Investment Committee will continue to meet with Schwab on a quarterly basis to review investment performance.

The Finance Committee held a budget work session on October 2, 2024. The goal was to simplify the budget and rely on the general ledger (*QuickBooks*) to establish the 2025 operating budget and standard monthly and quarterly financial reports. The Board of Directors approved the 2025 Budget Plan at the 2024 Fall Board of Directors meeting. The 2024 full-year budget actuals were in line with the budget plan with notably less reliance on reserve funds than in 2023. Thus far in 2025, expenditures are in line with the approved budget plan. The Finance Committee will continue to monitor budget performance on a quarterly basis.



Fundraising Committee

Committee Members: Diane Bates, Dan Brosz, Gary Fuchs (Chair), Dodie Rotherham)

Financial donations are critical to support the ongoing operations of AHSGR as well as targeted special projects such as the acquisition of records, translations, digitization, technology equipment, facility maintenance projects and improvements.

Multiple fundraising strategies are utilized by AHSGR:

- Winter and Spring Fundraising Drives, Give to Lincoln Day
- Targeted Fundraising Drives for specific needs
- Recurring Donations (e.g., monthly giving)
- Employee Matching Gift Programs
- Planned Giving such as bequests, endowments, gifts, IRA qualified charitable distributions, etc.
- Corporate Giving from organizations who have connections with the Germans from Russia
- Grants

The Fundraising Committee met on October 10, December 10, 2024 and February 11, 2025, to review various donor categories and ideas for potential outreach. The 2024 fundraising target of \$215,000 was exceeded due to several unexpected bequests from estates.

The committee has targeted several external foundations with connections to German from Russia individuals and corporations.

Genealogy Research Committee

Committee Members: Wayne Bonner (German Origins Project), Russ Gunther, Ray Karlin (Village Coordinator Liaison), Karen Keehr (Executive Director / Archivist), Larry Kimble, Elizabeth Koch, Susan Nakaji (Chair) Rosalind Rockweit, Sandra Wagner

The mission of the Genealogy Research Committee is to develop and implement genealogical research tools and services to explore the genealogical legacy of the German Settlers in the Russian Empire. This includes both online and in-person resources for both new and experienced genealogical researchers.

The Genealogy Research Committee has focused on the following projects over the past year.

German Origins Project

- This existing German Origins data on the AHSGR website is being reviewed, updated and converted to a database-compatible format. This has been a major project that was initiated two years ago and is nearing completion.
- The Board of Directors has approved funding to create a new German Origins database and web-based interface. This new database will be searchable by settlement village in Russia and surname. Users will be able to submit new German Origins information for inclusion in this database.

Village Coordinator Program

- The subset of active Village Coordinators is being confirmed. Village Coordinators who are not responsive or no longer active are being removed from the program. Our goal is to have an accurate, up-to-date list of highly engaged, responsive Village Coordinators.

Enhanced Web-based Tools

- Work is ongoing to develop an web-based interactive timeline that summarizes key milestones in the history of the Germans from Russia.

Digitization

- A high priority area of focus is digitization of AHSGR's collection to support on-line access. The Genealogy Research Committee works closely with AHSGR staff to define digitization priorities.



Supporting the Germans from Russia Community

- Genealogical records related to the Germans from Russia are held by AHSGR as well as other organizations and individuals. AHSGR is actively engaging with other parties to help ensure information is not lost with passing time. AHSGR technology platforms are available to provide storage and maintenance of genealogical records. Interested parties are encouraged to discuss with AHSGR.

Research Requests

- AHSGR staff at the Heritage Center responded to 414 research requests in 2024 and continues this pace through the first half of 2025.


Marketing and Public Affairs Committee

Committee Members: Diane Bates, Russ Gunther, Claire Landolt (Chair), Sally Petersen

The Marketing policy of AHSGR is to sustain a year-to-year, ongoing marketing/public affairs program with the purpose of promoting AHSGR and marketing Society products and services.

Social Media

- AHSGR maintains a social media presence on: Facebook, Instagram, Threads, TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn.
- Staff has assumed most social media responsibilities resulting in a more focused effort
- Social media is used to promote key events such as the annual convention, Give to Lincoln Day, Treffen Tuesday, Book Club, Writers Group, chapter events, etc.
- Started "This day in GR History" posts on social media.
- February is Hochzeit or Wedding Month
- January will be Railroad Month
- Grebel will be highlighted in September
- July 2024-May 2025 Top Views


Top content by views

[Boost content](#)
[See all content](#)


On this day 122 years ago, American...
Tue Mar 11, 8:00am
👁 20.9K ❤ 582
👍 84 ➦ 52

Kartoffel und Glase (or gleees, glaes, glace) is...
Sun Jan 26, 8:00am
👁 18.3K ❤ 298
👍 74 ➦ 32

Food was one of the most important part...
Fri Feb 21, 8:00am
👁 14.1K ❤ 163
👍 62 ➦ 25

Textile handicrafts have been a part of...
Fri Mar 28, 8:00am
👁 12.7K ❤ 78
👍 1 ➦ 9

This month AHSGR will be focusing on t..
Sat Mar 1, 8:00am
👁 11.9K ❤ 115
👍 11 ➦ 23


Top content by views

[Boost content](#)
[See all content](#)

Participate in a fun German-Russian fol...
Tue Dec 31, 8:01am
👁 1.9K ❤ 19
👍 1 ➦ 1

On this day 33 years ago, the Soviet Unio...
Thu Dec 26, 8:00am
👁 1.6K ❤ 32
👍 1 ➦ 7

Learn about German-Russian bridal fashio...
Tue Feb 11, 6:48am
👁 618 ❤ 30
👍 1 ➦ 5

What village are your ancestors from?..
Mon Mar 3, 10:06am
👁 414 ❤ 25
👍 8 ➦ 0

A staff member made Wedding Kuchen for..
Tue Feb 25, 8:16am
👁 387 ❤ 14
👍 0 ➦ 1



Website

- Pages with the most views:
 - /research/immigration-passenger-lists/by-ship/
 - /shop/
 - /research/
 - /shop/
 - /villages/
- Added "Menu" to the website to help with clarity.

Products

- T-Shirts: The folk-art design won the social media poll and will be available at 2025 Convention in Lincoln
- Core Pins were ordered for the Store will be available at the 2025 Convention in Lincoln
- We have a great new Catherine the Great sticker
- Grebel aprons were added to the store and are available for purchase
- "Kuchen Taster" trucker hats were ordered
- Top 5 store products (number sold)
 - Adventures of Konrad the Kamel*
 - Kuche Kochen*
 - Stuffed Camel Toy
 - Recipe Cards
 - Stickers

Events

- Staff are active in participating in numerous local community events, increasing the visibility of AHSGR in Lincoln
- Staff are also active in participating in local, state and national professional organizations
- Oktoberfest and Holiday harp concert held at the Heritage Center in 2024 and will be held in 2025
- Rootstech 2025: Diane Bates and Karen Keehr attended in Salt Lake City and met and connected with hundreds of people at the AHSGR booth

Great Nonprofits Update

- Members are encouraged to leave a review of AHSGR at <https://greatnonprofits.org>. More reviews will increase the visibility of AHSGR for prospective members or donors.



Membership Committee

Committee Members: Phylis Alt, Sheri Ertl, Sally Petersen, Rosalind Rockweit (Chair), Phillip Stuckert, Jack Unger

No increase in AHSGR membership prices since April 2023.

July 2024-June 2025 Membership Status:

- Total Active Members (June 30, 2025): 2,280
- Retention Rate: 72% (includes annual memberships only)

Member Renewal Support:

- Monthly review of membership data to monitor trends and detect renewal errors
- In coordination with AHSGR staff, committee members are personally following up with expired members to provide a reminder of their membership expiration, assistance with renewal, or to obtain feedback from individuals who elect not to renew.

Chapters:

- 31 active chapters including one new chapter (Snake River Chapter).
- No chapters deactivated in the past year.
- Chapter Leaders Forum initiated at the 2024 annual convention in Oklahoma City. This Forum continues to meet regularly to share best practices related to membership recruitment, programs, speakers, community engagement, etc. Chapter Newsletters are being shared with the Chapter Leaders Forum.

Policies and Procedures:

- Updated Policy 210: Distinguished Service Award (DSA)
- Updated Policy 211: Special Citation Award (SCA)

Member Handbook:

- Updated in 2025 and available on the Membership web page.



Strategic Planning Committee

Committee Members: Dan Brosz, Gary Fuchs (Co-Chair), Wayne Garman, Kristine Jones, John Spady, Sandra Wagner (Co-Chair)

Partnering/Outreach

The committee continues its focus on strategies to strengthen partnerships in the Germans from Russia community and build relationships with key academic institutions. Outreach to the Max Kade Institute for German American Studies at the University of Wisconsin explored possible greater collaboration and joining the American Historical Association as an affiliated society. The committee received a report on the Society's relationship with Canadian chapters and other Germans from Russia related organizations.

Funding Priorities

The committee developed a survey to gain input from Board Directors and staff regarding the priorities among the various competing demands for resources including:

- Implementation of a Digital Asset Management system to increase digital access to our collection and provide tools to create group-defined access.
- Update the aging Heritage Center facility in Lincoln, Nebraska to improve functionality and visitor experience
- Ongoing operations to support membership, programs, publications and collections.

AHSGR cannot afford to do everything it wants to do. We need to think carefully about where we focus our efforts to maximize our impact to the Germans from Russia interest community and strengthen the long-term viability of AHSGR. In the coming months, the Board of Directors will define this direction for AHSGR.

Other

- Pursuing actions to increase the academic profile of AHSGR. This includes bringing the *AHSGR Journal* into alignment with Scopus Indexed Journals.
- In February, the committee met with Cary Bright and discussed her experience working with commercial genealogy research organizations and how to raise the profile of the Germans from Russia ancestral groups.
- The committee evaluated feedback from participation in the 2025 RootsTech conference.